

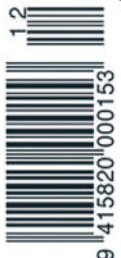
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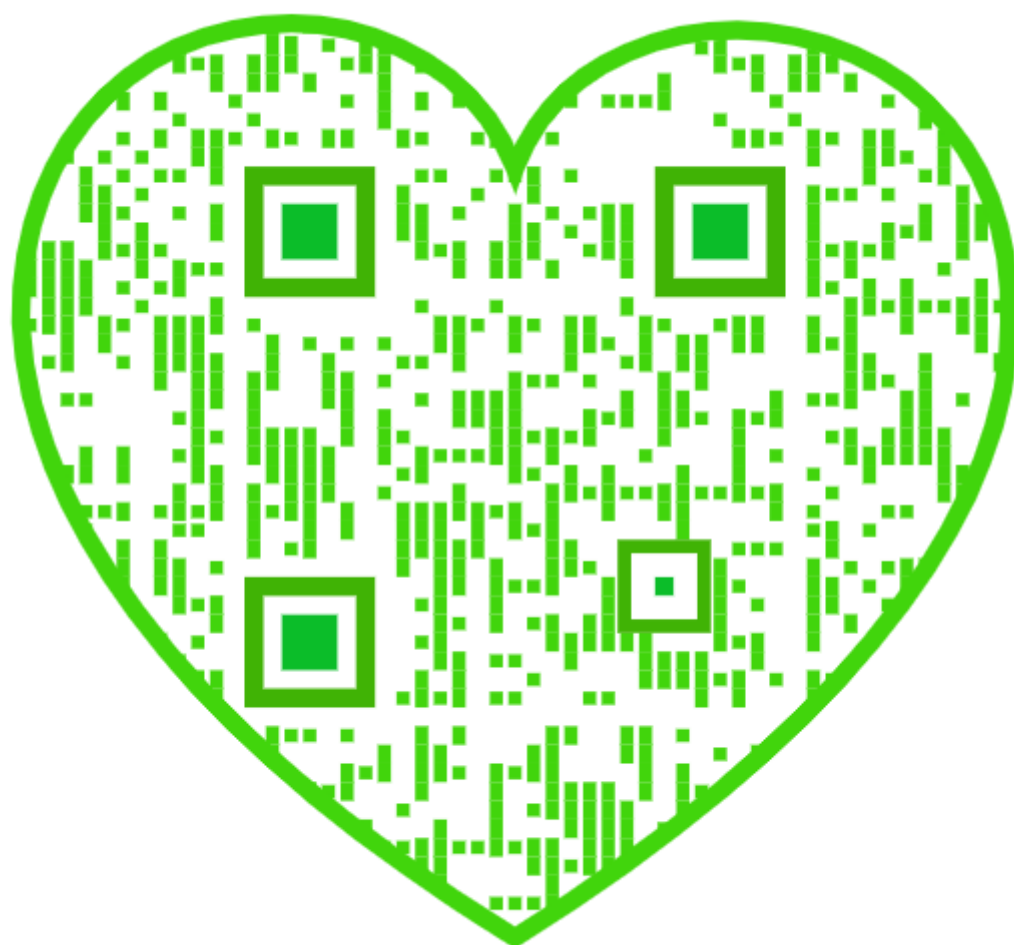
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SURVIVAL



ISSUE 249
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A person is seen from behind, hiking through a narrow, rocky stream. They are wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt, black shorts, and a green cap. A large, tan-colored Yeti backpack is on their back. The water is flowing rapidly over dark, wet rocks, creating a sense of movement and adventure. The background is filled with more rocks and some green foliage.

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Errors of a wise man

William Blake once said, "*Make the errors of a wise man, not the perfection of a fool.*"

Last week, we received an email pointing out a few grammatical errors in our latest issue—specifically in a feature written by someone for whom English is a second, possibly even third, language. As a publisher, were those mistakes ours to catch? Absolutely.

Should we have caught them? Of course.

But we didn't. We missed them, and that's on us.

Now, if we had relied on AI or ChatGPT or some other AI tool—those errors would have been scrubbed away. AI doesn't make grammatical mistakes. But it does make factual ones. And that's where the difference lies. AI writes with mechanical fluency, an uncanny smoothness that, at first glance, might seem impressive. But there's no soul in it. No nuance. No human aspect, which is often where the charm and character of a story reside.

When you read *Adventure*, you're not consuming a sterile, algorithmic blend of facts and trivia, stitched together from a thousand other sources. What you get is something raw, something real—real people, doing real things, telling real stories. Not just words on a page, but experiences lived and shared. That's a distinction that matters.

In an era where fake news, AI-generated images, and even virtual sports blur the lines between truth and fabrication, we choose authenticity over perfection. We own our mistakes. They're the blemishes on an organic apple—imperfect, maybe, but honest. Sure, you could buy a flawless, genetically modified apple, polished and sprayed to maintain perfection. It might look good, but how would it taste? Would it nourish you the same way? Would it carry the same depth of flavour that comes from sun, soil, and time?

Adventure isn't about a flawless, airbrushed version of the world. It's about the grit under your nails after a long climb, the ache in your legs after a tough trek, the sting of saltwater in your eyes after an ocean swim. It's about telling stories that aren't smoothed to perfection but that pulse with life, with humanity.

So yes, we made a mistake, and we'll probably make more, but we'll own them. Because we're not in the business of chasing perfection. We're in the business of telling real stories, about real adventures, experienced by real people. And if that means the occasional typo slips through? We'll take that over soulless perfection every single time.

Steve Dickinson / Editor



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BEHIND THE COVER:

Athlete: Lucy Sinclair - Image by Guillaume

"Returning home to Queenstown from university in Christchurch for the weekend, I had the opportunity to be part of something special. Guillaume, who does an incredible job with the Queenstown Climbing Club's guidebook, was photographing for the 4th edition. His dedication and the hard work he puts into the guidebook is truly inspiring.

We chose Wye Creek's Project Wall as the backdrop for the shoot, a location that offers some of the most stunning views of Queenstown. The photo captures me climbing the classic route Eat Yourself Fitter. The day was made even more memorable towards the end when we met up with other enthusiastic local climbers at Main Wall. All in all, it was a fantastic day, filled with great company, and a reminder of how lucky I am to be part of such a passionate and supportive climbing community."

Lucy Sinclair



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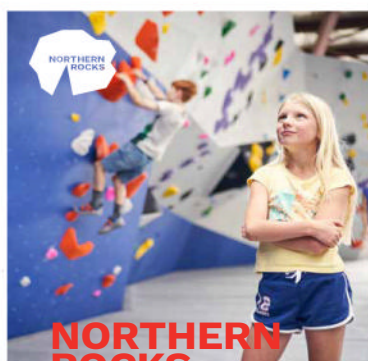
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Media Kits and Statistics are available at any time upon request. Submissions are always wanted, also letters/emails to the editor are always welcome and we are open to advice, critique and invitations - send to Steve@pacificmedia.co.nz

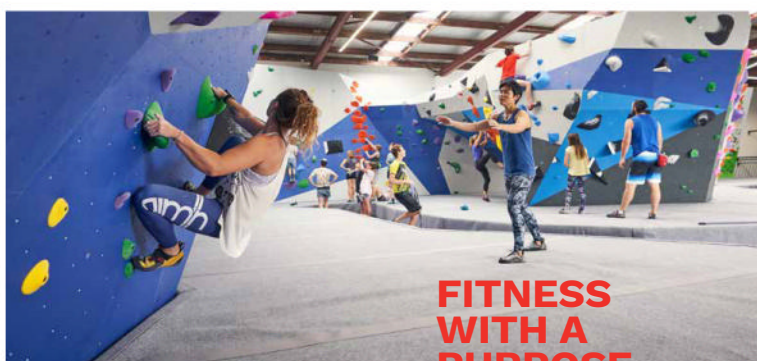
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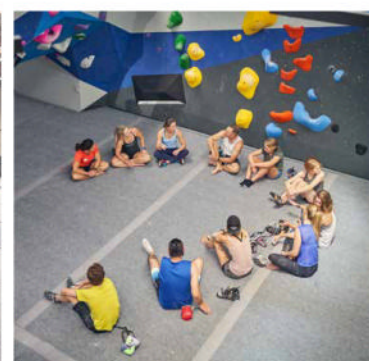


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LETTER OF THE ISSUE

Dear editor,

I just finished reading your story on regenerative tourism in Fiji, and I couldn't agree more—this is exactly the approach New Zealand needs to take. The idea of working with local communities to create tourism that gives back, rather than just takes, should be at the forefront of our industry.

Fiji's model—empowering local people, restoring ecosystems, and ensuring tourism dollars benefit the right places—feels like a blueprint for sustainable travel. In New Zealand, we pride ourselves on being clean, green, and responsible, but the reality doesn't always match the branding. Too often, mass tourism puts pressure on our fragile landscapes, without offering much in return. The Tongariro Crossing for example is way too over crowded and is a prime example of a region that needs to be permitted at the very least – in fact all our national parks should have entrance by permit only like in the States.

New Zealand's natural beauty is its greatest asset, but it's also its greatest responsibility. Let's learn from places like Fiji and commit to a tourism industry that regenerates rather than exploits.

*Looking forward to seeing more on this in Adventure.
Best regards,*

Jane Thomas- Wilson
Hamilton



Editor's Note:
Thanks for your email Jane

By way of thanks, we are sending you a year subscription and a great gift from our friends at hydroflask.

If you would like to send a letter to the editor – can be about anything from 'butterflies to brick bats' send to Steve@pacificmedia.co.nz – every letter we promise will be responded to.

Dear Editor

There are just as many women in adventure sports as there are men, yet Adventure always seems to be packed with features about men. Don't get me wrong—I enjoy reading about anyone's adventures, but I'd love to see a more balanced approach and more women featured in the magazine.

Sarah Conway, Auckland

Dear Sarah,

Thanks for your email. If you take a close look at the last few issues, you'll see there's actually a pretty good balance between men and women. That said, it hasn't always been this way—which is why we introduced the annual Women's Issue every August. It ensures that women get the recognition and coverage they deserve in adventure sports.

Regards, Steve



TOOLS TO SAVE OUR HOME PLANET: A CHANGEMAKER'S GUIDEBOOK

Climate change, pollution, and resource depletion threaten the planet's delicate balance, yet innovative solutions offer hope for a sustainable future. Tools to Save Our Planet, edited by Nick Mucha, Jessica Flint, and Patrick Thomas from Patagonia, explores the technologies, strategies, and actions that individuals, communities, and industries can use to combat environmental challenges.

From renewable energy and carbon capture to sustainable agriculture and circular economies, this book delves into practical tools that can drive real change. It highlights the power of science, policy, and collective effort in reshaping the world for future generations.

By examining both groundbreaking advancements and everyday solutions, Tools to Save Our Planet, is a selection of stories, essays and case studies that help empower readers with knowledge and inspiration to take action. The future is not yet written—but the tools to shape it are in our hands.

Get your hands on a copy of this book now.



BRINGING FEATURES TO LIFE



If you come across this TV logo in the digital issue, simply click on it to access the corresponding YouTube or video link, bringing the feature to life.

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a blue and yellow Salewa jacket, is sitting on a forest floor. She is looking up and to the left, smiling. In front of her are several green climbing ropes. The background is a sunlit forest with trees and foliage.

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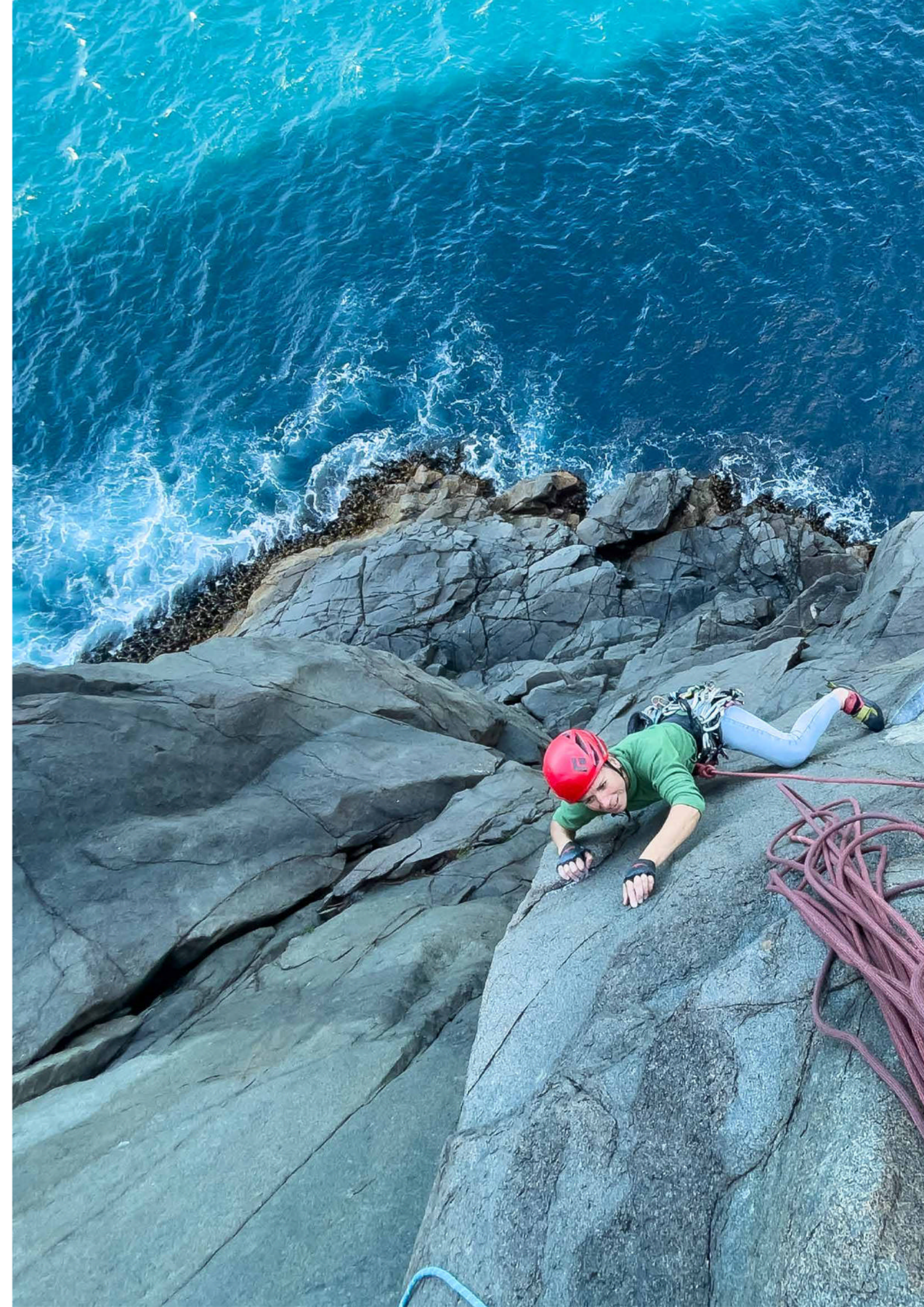
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THE FAMOUS SEA CLIFFS OF TASMANIA: CLIMB OUT OR BE STRANDED

Words and images by Derek Cheng

It's nerve-wracking enough for most people just to abseil down a 200m-cliff. For a taste of climbing in Tasmania, famous for its adventurous sea-cliff climbing, add the following ingredients: a cliff so steep that it's overhanging in places; wind gusts that unnervingly sweep your ropes across the rock face as you descend; a tempestuous sea that looks increasingly greedy as you get closer to it.

And then there's the commitment factor: you have to be able to climb back out. Failure to do so means you'll be stuck on the wall, left to wave your arms at the next tourist boat that may or may not visit the particular area of the Tasman Peninsula you're stranded on.

There's also the requisite skill known in climbing parlance as The Bounce, without which you cannot abseil an overhanging wall. This means pushing off the wall with your feet as you descend and clipping the rope into the bolts in the cliff as you do so. Failure to do this will mean you lose touch with the cliff, leaving you dangling in space on a free-hanging rope.

All of these elements collide on the south-facing cliff of Mount Brown, home of the classic 10-pitch route Talk is Cheap (24). Several times I had to rescue the rope from being blown across the cliff in a way that could entangle it. Other times I had swallow my fear and commit to The Bounce, as I lowered myself down one of the five overhanging pitches.

Just as I was coming to the last of the abseils, a tremendous crash into the ocean signalled not only some form of nearby rockfall, but also what a worst-case scenario could look like. Indeed my partner Rachel, who couldn't see me at the time, initially thought that something had fallen and severed the rope, sending me into the drink. Lucky for her, and for me, that wasn't the case.

But this is the kind of scenario climbers in Tasmania have had to contemplate ever since the introduction of the sport to this rugged island. The first recorded climb was in 1914, when visiting alpinists from Australia traversed the ridge of Cradle Mountain.

The sea cliffs of Tasman Peninsula were first explored in the mid-1960s, with the first ascent of The Candlestick being a particular example of local resourcefulness, or stubbornness, or both.

Rachel Knott climbing above the sea on Mount Brown, Tasmania

The Candlestick is a 130m high tower of rock standing between the mainland and Mitre Rock. The first ascent was done via a make-shift 120m flying fox between them, meaning a crew of dedicated locals had to swim from the mainland to Mitre Rock to set it up.

Various efforts were made to get one end of the nylon ropes to Mitre Rock from the mainland, including using a bow and arrow. This failed, perhaps unsurprisingly. So too did using a kite. Success eventually came in the unlikely form of hydrogen balloons, but the ropes got snagged in a tree, and attempts to free it - by shooting the tree in half with a rifle - failed. Cue the dedicated swimmers, who found and freed the ropes, and then established the rig.

This was also no minor matter. It had to be in the right spot so climbers could attach themselves to it from the mainland, and then ride it halfway across in a way that allowed them to touch down on The Candlestick. Reg Williams, John Moore and Allan Kellar then slid down the flying fox, dismounted at a point high on The Candlestick, and then climbed the final 25m to the summit.

Next to The Candlestick is its more famous neighbour, the Totem Pole (featured in Adventure Magazine, December 2018), a 70m-high, four-metre wide block that rises straight from the ocean. And at the northern end of Fortescue Bay resides The Moai, a 35m-high pillar that can be accessed - thankfully - without crossing a body of water.

"The Moai is cute, something of a bonsai version of the Totem Pole," says first ascent climber Roger Parkyn. This, however, does not necessarily protect you from a tempestuous sea, as we discovered during our visit. None of our climbing trio were spared from being saturated by violent waves.

This is also an ever-present danger on the granite sea-cliffs of Freycinet National Park, where nature seems to be dialled up to 11: bright red lichen, turquoise-coloured water, shore-hugging kelp of luminous lime. The area is home to a crag known as the Star Factory, a steep cliff of deeply red-coloured rock, where the warm-up is a stiff 23.

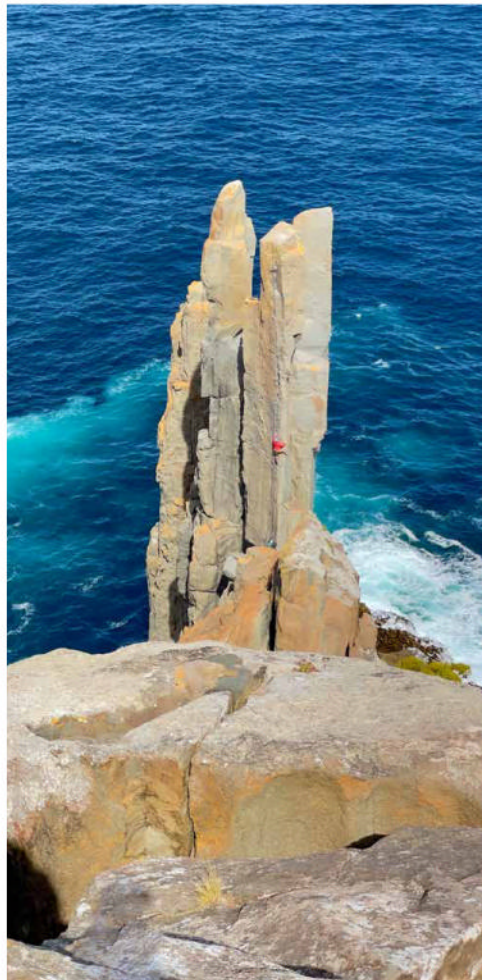
Chris Davis climbing the dramatic the sea stack at Fortescue Bay known as The Moai







The tiny figure of Chris Davis among the sea stacks of Cape Raoul



A climber enjoying the technical arete climbing on Pole Dancer (22), Cape Raoul.

And then there's Cape Raoul, whose Pole Dancer pillar has lured climbers from far and wide to its technical, exposed, excellent climbing as the waves smash into the base far below. Just getting to Pole Dancer is an adventure of the highest order: an abseil to the eastern side of the cliff, a 60m climb to the top of the ridge, a scramble along the spine with endless views of the ocean either side, and then another abseil and scramble to the base of the pillar. The odour here becomes distinct: the rocky platforms below are a seals' paradise, the rolling waves offering endless rides for those wanting to inject some playfulness in between their sunbathing.

Cape Raoul is also typically committing. Many climbers get benighted, as in, they fail to make it back to civilisation before nightfall, and end up in a shiver-bivvy. At least they usually sleep - or try to sleep - in a flat spot, though. No such luxury would be afforded to climbers on Mount Brown's Talk is Cheap, who, having abseiled in, fail to climb out.

"It's wild sea-cliff climbing in an outrageous position," says first ascensionist Garry Phillips. "You are always on the edge. The rock is not always immaculate, but that is what adventure climbing is all about."

I looked up at the start of the climb in a distinct state of anxiety, having just heard the colossal splash from a huge rockfall.

But, as previously stated, the choices were either to climb out, or wait for a tourist boat to pick us up, which would require the unenviable task of diving into the ocean.

The advantage of abseiling the route is that you get a glimpse of what the climbing will be like. It was no surprise, then, to encounter three overlaps on the crux pitch (24), culminating in a nerve-racking traverse to the anchor point. A small roof was the crux on the next pitch (22), followed by a steep face leading into a corner (20), and then a juggy face on an overhang, finishing with an undercling move with the so-called Pocket of Love (23). Unfortunately the thin crack on the next pitch (22) spat me out; the rock was so slippery and slick that I ended up resorting to aiding past it.

By the time I neared the top, both of my arms were starting to cramp at the elbow tendons. Fortunately the angle of the cliff started to relent, and the final pitches presented climbing of much less difficulty. At the top, back on terra firma, we collapsed on the flat ground and inhaled the satisfaction of having climbed one of the peninsula's best routes.

It was my second trip to Tasmania, which reinforced what the first one had already taught me: that there's so much to do. It's a world-class climbing destination, with an abundance of natural, rugged beauty. Just like after the first trip, I resolved to return.

A man is climbing a rock face, reaching up with one arm. He is wearing a dark tank top and shorts. The rock is a mix of brown and grey.

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Isaac Buckley working strenuous moves on Katalepsis (32), Babylon, Fiordland
Photo: Tom Hoyle

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LUCKY TO BE ALIVE:

When bears attack, you need mates!

Brad Lowry and Kendall Cummings set out for a routine shed-hunting (picking up antlers) trip in Wyoming's Shoshone National Forest, expecting a day of hard trekking and maybe a few good finds. What they got instead was a life-or-death struggle against one of nature's most fearsome predators.

The Northwest College wrestling teammates, along with two others, had split up, taking a longer, winding route back to their truck. As they moved through thick undergrowth, the warning signs became impossible to ignore—massive paw prints, overturned logs, and steaming piles of fresh scat. “*We knew bears were around,*” Lowry later said. “*But we didn't know we were about to be right in the middle of one's kill zone.*”

Then, chaos erupted.

A grizzly sow exploded from the brush and charged straight at Lowry, slamming him off a small rock outcropping before sinking its teeth into his arm. The impact was brutal. The bear thrashed him like a ragdoll, its teeth and claws ripping into his shoulder and chest. Lowry had bear spray, but the attack was too fast, too violent—there was no time to react.

Just ten metres away, Cummings saw his friend being mauled and made an instant, reckless decision. Armed with nothing but desperation, he threw himself at the bear, grabbing its head in an attempt to rip it off Lowry. It worked—the grizzly let go. But now, Cummings was the target. The bear turned and dragged him into the trees. Then, silence.

Lowry, broken and bleeding, knew there was only one chance. He scrambled up a nearby hill where he knew he could get cell reception. With what strength he had left, he called 911 and flagged down their teammates, Orrion Jackson and August Harrison. “*The bear's got Kendall,*” he gasped. “*He might be dead.*”

Without hesitation, Harrison took off into the trees, bear spray in hand. Minutes later, Cummings staggered out of the forest, covered in blood. “It looked like his face had been ripped off,” Lowry recalled. But against all odds, he was alive.

With no time to waste, their teammates hauled the battered men nearly two kilometres down the mountain, meeting a rescue team that rushed them to safety. Cummings was airlifted to St. Vincent Healthcare in Montana, while Lowry was taken by ambulance.

Both underwent multiple surgeries—Lowry for a broken arm, Cummings for severe head and facial injuries. The road to recovery will be long. But one thing is certain: neither man has any intention of staying out of the mountains.

“*We'd do it all over again,*” Lowry said. “*Because that's what brothers do.*”



EYE-OPENING FACTS AT A GLANCE

THERE ARE **40** BEAR ATTACKS ON HUMANS WORLDWIDE EVERY YEAR

48 FATAL BEAR ATTACKS IN NORTH AMERICA FROM 2000–2017

MOST BEAR ATTACKS OCCUR BECAUSE BEARS FEEL THREATENED

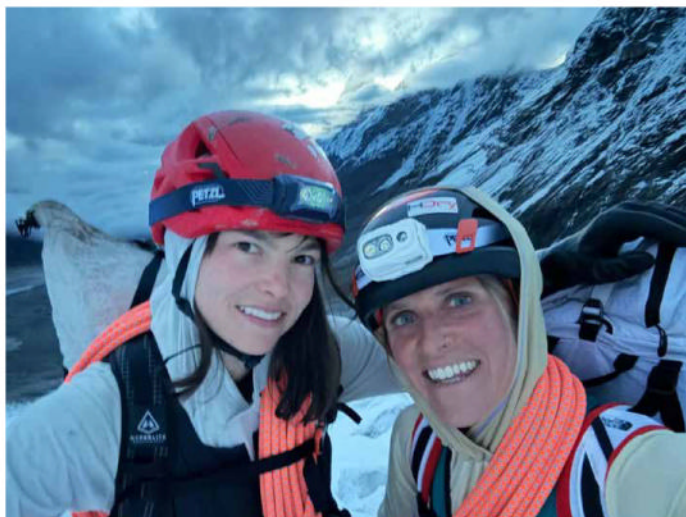
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HUMANS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR **71%** OF GRIZZLY BEAR DEATHS

ALMOST **1 IN 2.1 MILLION** CHANCES OF BEING ATTACKED BY A BEAR



TRAPPED AT 6000 METRES:

How Two Climbers Defied the Himalayas

At 6,000 metres, survival is a brutal equation of endurance, luck, and sheer will. British climber Fay Manners and American partner Michelle Dvorak had all three tested to the limit when a loose rock severed the rope holding their supplies, leaving them stranded on the unforgiving slopes of Mount Chaukhamba in northern India.

The pair, both seasoned alpinists, lost their tent, food, and critical survival gear in an instant. The only thing between them and the lethal cold was a single sleeping bag. As the snow closed in, they huddled on a narrow rock ledge, bodies shutting down from hypothermia, fuel reserves running dry.

Manners managed to send an SOS via satellite, but with visibility near zero, the rescue helicopter repeatedly failed to spot them. Hours stretched into a second night. The only option left was movement. On the third morning, desperate for water, they began abseiling towards a patch of melting ice—exhausted, shaky, and fully aware that one mistake could mean the end.

Then, a break. A French climbing team, alerted by mutual friends, reached them first, sharing food, gear, and most crucially, their exact location with rescuers. This time, when the helicopter returned, it didn't miss.

Three days in the death zone would rattle even the most hardened climbers, but Manners is no stranger to extreme conditions. In 2022, she became the first woman to complete the Phantom Direct route on the Grand Jorasses' south face in Mont Blanc, and she's since tackled peaks in Greenland and Pakistan. But even with her experience, nothing could prepare her for the raw, relentless exposure of the Himalayas.

For every summit story, there's the risk of a different ending. Manners and Dvorak's ordeal is a stark reminder that in the high mountains, survival is never guaranteed. Their skill, grit, and the intervention of fellow climbers made the difference. And this time, the mountains let them go.



All images courtesy of Facebook

MOUNT CHAUKHAMBA IS
SITUATED IN THE HIMILAYAS

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CHAUKAMBA II	7,070 M (23,196 FT)
CHAUKAMBA III	6,995 M (22,949 FT)
CHAUKAMBA IV	6,854 M (22,487 FT)

SURVIVING BASEJUMPING:

Make some good decisions

Images and captions by Jimmy Martinello

Alenka Mali grew up in a family that never followed the conventional path. Her parents, both accomplished alpinists, built their lives around the mountains, prioritizing adventure over societal expectations. Their passion shaped her and her brothers, instilling in them the same relentless drive to push boundaries. Alenka's earliest memories are in Argentina, spending time in Patagonia's legendary base camps, surrounded by icons like Dean Potter, Steph Davis, and Leo Houlding. While her parents pursued first ascents on Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre, she and her siblings' climbed trees, played with gear, and absorbed a world where risk and reward went hand in hand. It wasn't until she got older that she realized how extraordinary—and rare—that upbringing really was.

The first time I saw a BASE jumping video was in 2011—Jeb Corliss flying a wingsuit somewhere in Europe, with AWOLNATION's *Sail* blasting in the background. That song became forever linked to the sport in my mind, even though at the time, BASE wasn't something I ever imagined myself doing. Around then, I discovered the books of Steph Davis—a climber who, like my mom, had explored Patagonia. She was the first female athlete I truly looked up to and thought, "One day, I want to be like her." Years passed, and BASE faded from my thoughts. But in Squamish, a town that embodied the freedom I craved, I stumbled into a tight-knit community of jumpers. Their relationship with fear, risk, and life itself was different. Watching them, I felt something stir in me. And in January 2022, I took the leap—literally.

Our group was made up of Cris Ruiz (our director), Viktor (DOP), Josh and Nick (drone ops), Brent (camp manager), Jimmy Martinello (mountain safety and photographer), and Spencer and I.

We have met the night before to hone down the logistics of the trip, as well as the risks. I have spent endless times refreshing all my forecasting websites, weeks prior, completely immersed myself into the planning of this trip, losing all sense of reality, walking around staring at my phone... arranging helicopter availability, founding for the movie all the way down to finding tents and sleeping bags for the crew. Most importantly, coming up with a delicious menu and planning all the food that would keep us warm and fed, on top of the mountain.

Goat Ridge lays just South of Squamish, it is a ridge that extends from Sky Pilot and Co Pilot, forming an interesting horseshoe, with incredible views of Squamish, coastal mountains and the Pacific.

It is just a 12 minute flight from Squamish Airport, but for 8 people and a lot of gear (cameras, drones, cooking stuff, camping stuff...), that's quite an

operation. Logistically and financially. Lining up 8 people to take 4 days off their busy lives, for a passion project, but expecting to be available for a whole weather window (which usually lasts 8-12 days), it's a lot. But luck was on our side, for the Goat. In more ways than one.

Around 10 am that day, everyone and all the gear was safely on top of the mountain. Thanks to our friend Darren from Black Tusk Helicopters. Debating whether we should be camping on top of the ridge or below it, was the most common question that Spencer and I asked ourselves 10x times a day... pro and con-ing each side, until we finally settled for the top.

The chances of successfully completing a BASE jump, especially as technical as a snowboard BASE, would be much higher that way. The reason for that is, hanging out on top would mean hanging out at the exit. When you are hanging out right at the exit, you can feel the wind on your cheeks, knowing exactly how it moves around the features of that mountain.

The more time we spent up there, the more in tune we were with the elements. Listening to the wind, looking at the snow...

We had spent the majority of the first day building camp, scouting the perfect exit and shaping the kicker. The conditions lined up quite well, the air became still and that might've been our window. After jumping into one of the gullies of the ridge, we would have to ascend via one of the North facing couloirs. There was a massive cornice, the size of a small car, hanging right above our main way back up. Given the fact that we spent the whole day shoveling, and the whole thing would go way into the night, we made a good decision, and went to bed.

I heard my dad's voice in my head "Make some good decisions..."



Alenka Mali finds the window of opportunity to take flight. Sunset and calm winds open's up the exit to soar from the cliff edge of Goat Ridge Squamish BC.



Basecamp Goat Ridge



Building the jump ramp, preparation key to a safe and successful jump.

A good sleep is a poor choice of words for that first night. I kept thinking about my jump. What if we had missed our window? We only have 2 more days here, will we get our opportunity? What happens if the jump doesn't go as planned?

The whole team practiced rescue scenarios and all possible ways that things would go wrong, were talked about over and over again. We all felt quite confident and capable in the event of an accident. Being that close to town puts your mind at ease in those situations.

The next day, we woke up to a full wind storm! Sunny, but very strong winds. Our kitchen tent almost blew away... it was like we shot ourselves in the foot. "Why did we not jump yesterday??" That was a wrong move...

When it comes to BASE jumping, the number one rule is to not jump in wind! Everyone understands this concept differently, some might jump with a little bit of wind, others might jump with strong winds, as long as the landing area is calm, or vice versa... personally — I like it below 5 km/h. That would be my standard tolerance. With some exceptions of course, but I'm not known as someone who pushes her luck all the time.

Waiting for wind is really frustrating. We set up multiple flags around the base camp. One at the exit, one at the tent, one at the kitchen... by noon, everyone

including the filmers were walking around saying: "I think it's calming down". Getting almost illusional and lost in our own hope, we were desperate for any kind of lull.

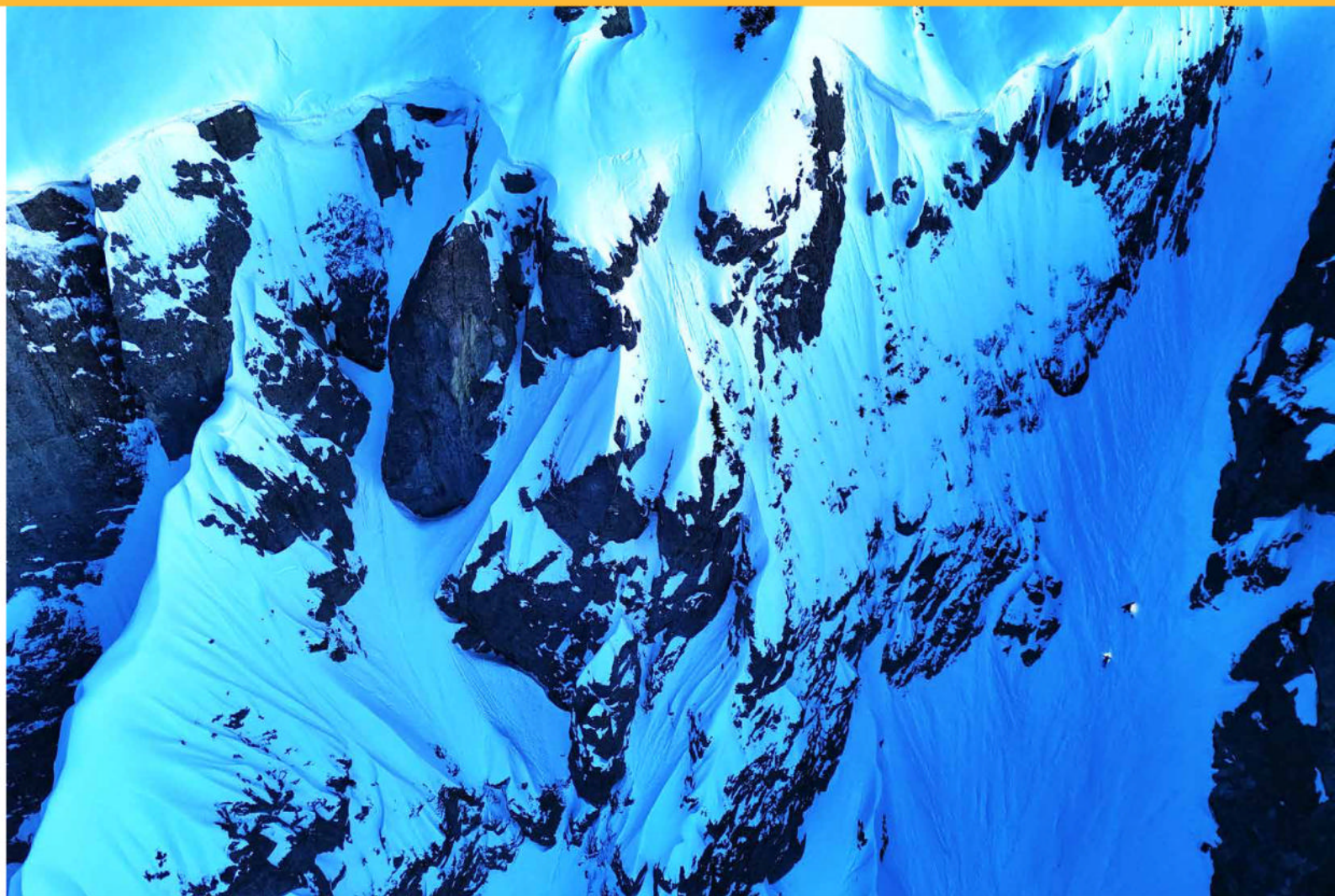
By 6 pm, the wind actually started to trend down. Spencer and I started to get ready. It was starting to feel real, my heart beating faster and faster, as everyone got into their positions.

Spencer and I had to dress appropriately and do the jump with all the gear necessary for our ascend back up. That meant strapping the ice axe between my bindings, putting the skins on my belly, as well as the head lamp, an ascender and gloves! Jumping around 7 pm meant only one thing. We would be coming back up in the dark.

The time had come, and I was strapped into my snowboard. I felt calm and I felt really good about the whole thing. Leg straps, chest strap. Quick 1 minute check, I was ready. I was jumping first, and Spencer would go right after me.

After being done with our preparation we were forced to wait until all the drones were up in the air, and filming.

From the moment I started riding, I felt free. This was everything I have ever imagined, and more! The jump went absolutely perfect. As I landed, I looked up, and felt tears running down my cheeks. I confirmed my landing on the radio and everyone cheered. But it wasn't over yet.



-Alenka and Spenser Seabrooke climbing back up after completing an incredible snowboard base jump Goat Ridge.

They counted down Spencer dropping, and a few seconds later, he opened his parachute, soaring through the still air above me, his happy screams echoing the narrow gully we jumped into. He landed all stoked and we ran into each other's arms. We had accomplished something we have been talking about for quite some time.

Not wanting to lose any more time, we quickly transitioned, stashed our parachutes and strapped the boards on top of our stash bags. We strapped into the crampons and started the long ascend up the couloir. The sun went down behind the Tantalus range and it was getting darker. With the darkness came the cold. But we didn't feel it, we felt fire inside of our chests, burning through any doubt or tiredness of the moment.

Working together, punching the boot pack, we searched for the snow that wasn't too hard, or too soft but just perfect. Like a staircase back to reality. For the last 100 meters, Jimmy and Brent rigged a static rope, which we clipped into our jumars, and that helped as the climb got steeper.

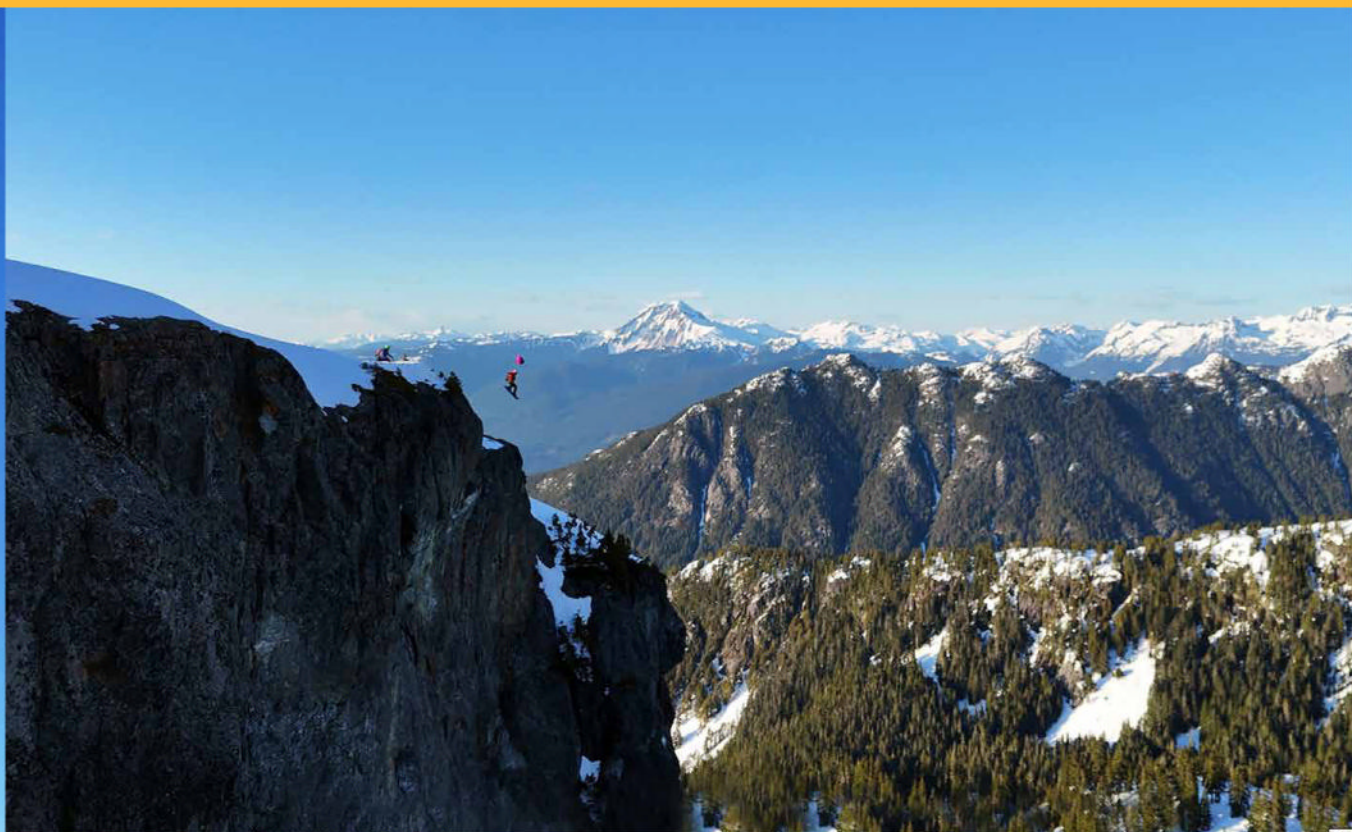
Coming up above the cornice we took a moment, just him and I to reflect and just be still for a second. We had just finished a huge thing, we set our minds to, months ago. But that moment passed quickly and the hunger crept in.

Spaghetti and meatballs never tasted so good. And our thin thermarests, never felt so comfortable.

"When it comes to BASE jumping, the number one rule is to not jump in wind! Everyone understands this concept differently, some might jump with a little bit of wind, others might jump with strong winds, as long as the landing area is calm, or vice versa... personally – I like it below 5 km/h. That would be my standard tolerance. With some exceptions of course, but I'm not known as someone who pushes her luck all the time."



Taking a leap of faith



Wing is up, Alenka flying to safe ground.



I quickly check the ice axe strapped down between my bindings on my Prior split board with two ski straps and some gorilla tape. It looks solid. The crampons are on the front of my belly; I padded them with some softshell material. I run through the checklist in my mind. What do I actually need for the climb back up? I rarely approach my lines from the top... and when I do, I'm usually wearing a backpack.

I look around me... it's way past 6 pm. If we want to do this, we need to do it now. The wind is calming down and lulls are becoming longer and more frequent. This might be our chance. I look at Spencer and he gives me a nod. OK, I think. It's GO time.

I'm sure many people will relate to this, but accomplishing a big goal is a lot less glamorous than it actually sounds. I have experienced it before, when I used to compete more. First place feels good for about an hour, and after that... it kind of loses its meaning.

Snowboard BASE was high on my list in 2024. Visualizing daily, the same 7 seconds I was about to experience. Ride down, focus on the kicker, stay in line, don't catch an edge, make sure you get a good pop and stay balanced... hold.. and pitch!

Boom. And just like that, It came and went.

Check out Jimmy Martinello Photography
Special Thanks to Sponsors: North Face, Prior Skis, Mountain Life, and Pachamamafilms.

RIVER DANGER:

Incredible river rescue

In a dramatic rescue operation on Tasmania's Franklin River, a 65-year-old Lithuanian man survived being trapped between rocks and the surging current for nearly 20 hours, though at the cost of his leg. The man, whose name has not been released, was scouting rapids with his crew when he slipped on a rock and became lodged in what river enthusiasts know as a "sieve." These natural traps, where water rushes through narrow rock gaps, can become lethal when debris—or a person—becomes pinned.

The Franklin River, known for its remote wilderness and challenging rapids, has claimed its share of adventurers. For this man, however, rescue came at an extraordinary cost. Tasmanian emergency crews worked tirelessly through the night, employing pulley systems, hydraulic tools, and inflatable air bags to attempt to free him. Despite their efforts, the man remained wedged "like an hourglass" between two massive boulders, forcing rescuers to make the grim decision to amputate his leg to save his life.

A Test of Human Strength and Resolve

"This was the most challenging case I've ever been a part of," said Mitch Parkinson, an intensive care flight paramedic with Ambulance Tasmania. The paramedic commended the man's resilience during the ordeal, describing him as "exceptionally strong" and unyielding in his determination to survive.

The man's crew, which included a Lithuanian doctor who served as a translator, kept his spirits up with hot food and drinks while rescuers fought the river. The doctor's presence proved invaluable, providing both medical advice and a lifeline of communication as rescuers worked against the clock.

The Toughest of Calls

Callum Herbert of the Tasmanian police summed up the situation starkly: "This rescue was the worst-case scenario of the worst-case scenario." Every conceivable method was exhausted before the team resorted to amputation. "He could not be physically removed any other way, despite using every resource at our disposal," Herbert said.

Despite the grim nature of the rescue, the man's positive attitude astonished everyone on the scene. His sheer grit, combined with the teamwork of rescuers and fellow rafters, turned what could have been a fatal situation into a story of survival against the odds.

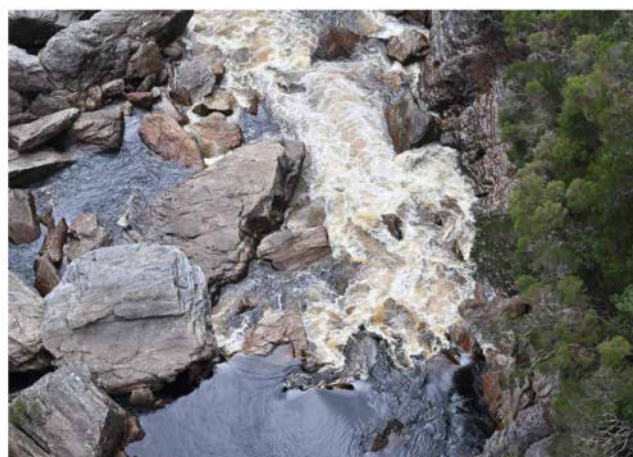
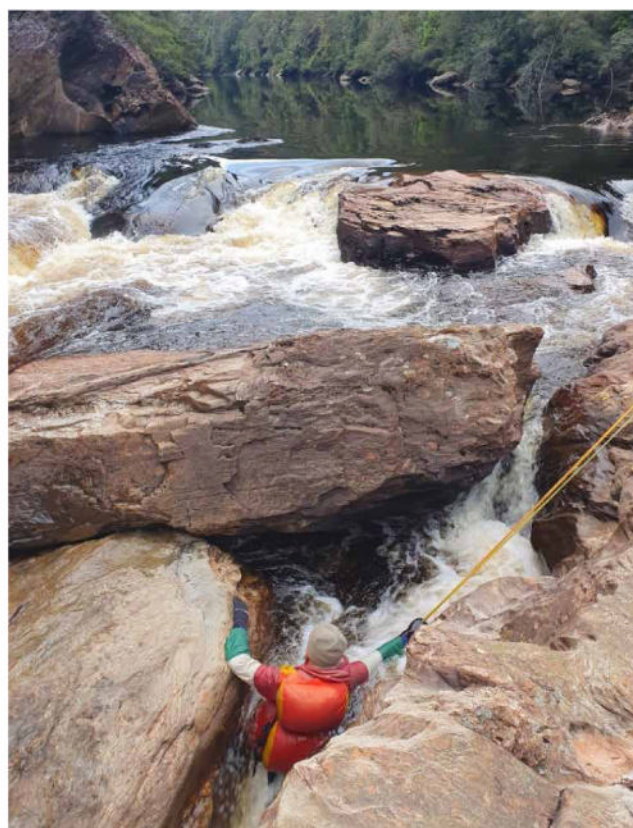
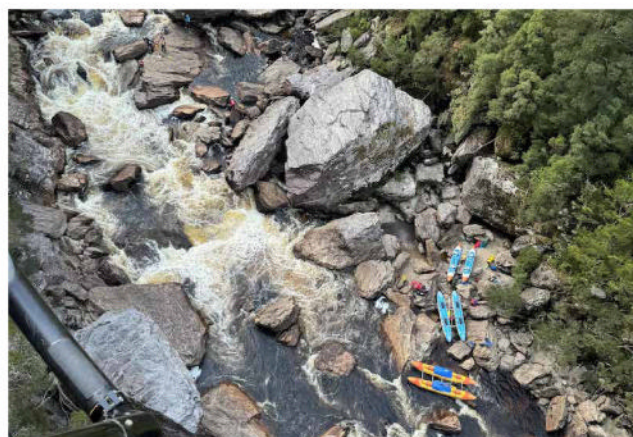
What Was He Paddling?

While early reports indicated the man was in a packraft, aerial images suggested otherwise. Some have speculated he was in a Russian-style Bublik, a hybrid between a catamaran and a kayak designed for extreme whitewater. These discrepancies highlight the chaos and confusion often surrounding such incidents, especially in remote areas.

Echoes of Aron Ralston

The ordeal draws comparisons to the infamous 2003 incident involving climber Aron Ralston. Trapped in a Utah slot canyon by a boulder, Ralston amputated his arm after five days to save his life—a hauntingly similar test of human endurance and survival.

The Lithuanian rafter is hoping to return home soon; his survival a testament to resilience, teamwork, and the lengths humans will go to save a life. For adventurers, the incident serves as a sobering reminder of nature's power—and the high stakes of exploring its wildest corners.



ADRIFT AT SEA:

36 hrs in a rubber ring



What began as a carefree evening swim quickly turned into a harrowing test of endurance for a young Chinese woman off the coast of Japan. On the evening of July 8, 2024, she was enjoying the water with a friend when, in an instant, she was swept away by the current. Within half an hour, she had vanished.

Authorities were alerted at 7:55 p.m. when her friend reported her missing at a nearby store, triggering an urgent search by the Japan Coast Guard. But as the hours stretched into the following day, there was no sign of her.

Then, at dawn on July 10—36 hours after she was lost at sea—a cargo ship spotted a lone figure drifting over 80 kilometers offshore, roughly the distance from Auckland Harbour to the Coromandel. The ship radioed for help, and the crew of the LPG tanker Kakuwa Maru No. 8 answered the call. In a daring rescue, two crew members plunged into the open ocean, pulling the exhausted woman to safety.

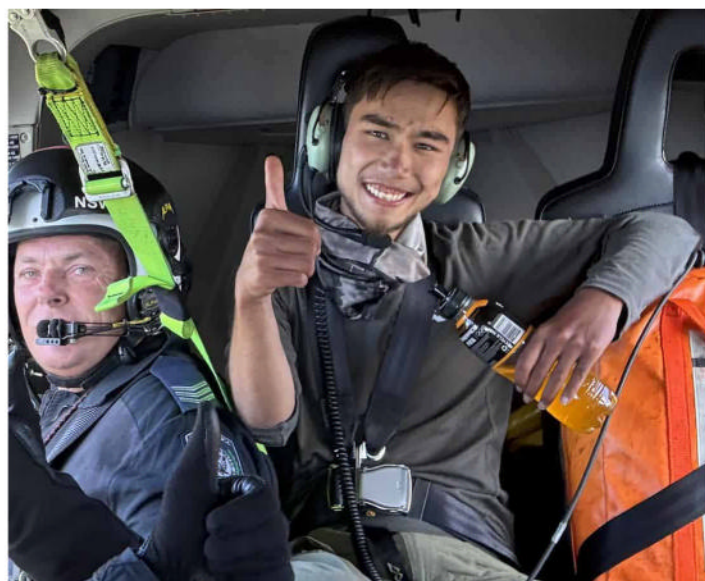
Dehydrated but alive, she was airlifted to a hospital in Yokohama, her ordeal finally over. Against the odds, she had survived the unforgiving sea—proof that human resilience and the courage of rescuers can make all the difference when adventure turns to survival.

So, how did she end up so far out at sea? Underwater currents and winds from the nearby mountains swept her away, and swimming with a rubber ring possibly made it harder to swim against the currents.

A Safety Reminder

This incident serves as a stark reminder of the ocean's unpredictable nature. Here are some tips to stay safe:

1. Stay Informed: Always check local weather and water conditions before swimming. Heed any warnings about strong currents or winds.
2. Swim with a Buddy: Never swim alone. Having a friend with you can make all the difference in an emergency.
3. Stay Close: Avoid swimming far from shore, especially if you're not an experienced swimmer.
4. Ditch the Floaties: While fun, inflatables can be dangerous in open water. Opt for a proper life jacket if you need flotation assistance.
5. Stay Calm: If caught in a current, try to remain calm and signal for help. Swim parallel to the shore to escape the current's grip.



TWO WEEKS:

Lost in the wilderness

An Australian hiker, 23-year-old Hadi Nazari, was found alive after being missing for nearly two weeks in Kosciuszko National Park. Nazari, a medical student from Victoria, was last seen on December 26, 2024, as he separated from his friends to take photos while descending the Hannells Spur Trail. When he failed to meet up with them at their campsite, his friends raised the alarm, sparking a large-scale search operation.

Two weeks later, Nazari was discovered near Blue Lake by a group of hikers. The young man, who had been lost for over two weeks, approached the hikers, explaining that he was thirsty and had been stranded in the wilderness. They immediately contacted emergency services, and he was airlifted to safety. After being assessed by paramedics, he was transported to a hospital for a full medical examination.

Despite his ordeal, Nazari was reported to be in good health. During the search, authorities learned that he had survived on a sparse diet of muesli bars and berries and had accessed water from nearby creeks. He also found shelter in a mountain hut, where he discovered two muesli bars, which he ate to sustain himself.

Police began their search on December 27, after Nazari was officially reported missing. Over the following days, authorities found items linked to him, including hiking poles, a campfire, and a camera. The discovery of these items, along with extensive search efforts involving rescue teams, led to the positive outcome of his rescue.

The Riverina Police praised the collaborative efforts of emergency responders, volunteers, and the public in locating Nazari.

FATAL FRAMES:

The unseen danger of chasing the perfect selfie

In an age where a single photo can catapult someone to viral fame, capturing the perfect selfie has become more than a pastime—it's an obsession. But for some, that pursuit has turned fatal. The rising number of selfie-related deaths has made it one of the deadliest modern-day activities, claiming more lives than shark attacks and other freak accidents.

A Wikipedia tally estimated 379 selfie-related deaths between 2008 and 2021. By the end of 2024, that number had soared to 480. The reasons vary—falls from dangerous heights, drownings, even fatal encounters with wildlife—but one common thread ties them all: the lure of an extraordinary image.

Many of these tragedies unfold in stunning locations—cliff tops, scenic overlooks, and sites made famous by movies. In Japan, the small city of Otaru has had to hire security personnel to control tourists so focused on snapping the ideal shot that they step straight into danger. Visitors flock to Funami-za, a picturesque sloping street immortalized in the 2015 film *Cities in Love*, often unaware of the very real hazards that lurk beyond their camera screens.

The consequences can be deadly. Recently a Chinese tourist, fixated on framing the perfect shot, stepped onto railway tracks in Otaru and was struck by an oncoming train. Her husband told police she never even saw it coming. Japan isn't alone in confronting the dangers of reckless selfies. A quick glance at Wikipedia's growing list of selfie-related deaths paints a grim picture—incidents ranging from accidental shootings to fatalities involving hand grenades.

Social media is a powerful motivator, driving individuals to take ever-greater risks for attention. Steve Cole, policy director at the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, reports that falls from heights are the leading cause of selfie-related deaths, followed closely by drownings. "This trend of taking selfies in hazardous locations—on cliff edges, during extreme weather, or atop precarious structures—is deeply concerning," he says.

Survival expert Ray Mears has even had to issue new instructions to his clients: "Don't step backward off a cliff while taking a selfie." Similarly, mountain rescue teams in England's Peak District have warned hikers against posing for photos on treacherous rock formations. The UK Coastguard has repeatedly urged people to stop snapping photos from dangerously eroding cliffs, a plea that has gone largely unheeded.

Governments have been forced to act. In 2015, after a string of deaths, Russian authorities launched a nationwide "Safe Selfie" campaign, warning citizens that a photo isn't worth their life. One case that made headlines involved two young Russian soldiers who pulled the pin on a live grenade for an ill-advised selfie. The photo survived. They did not.

"One case that made headlines involved two young Russian soldiers who pulled the pin on a live grenade for an ill-advised selfie. The photo survived. They did not."

For many influencers, the more extreme the image, the more engagement it garners. Travel writer Siân Anna Lewis, who runs *The Girl Outdoors* blog, admits, "It's much harder now to stand out on social media than it was a decade ago. You need an angle, something eye-catching."

This mentality has fuelled dangerous trends like "rooftopping," where daredevils scale skyscrapers for gravity-defying photos. In 2017, Chinese influencer Wu Yongning fell to his death from a 62-story building while filming a stunt. His final moments were caught on video.

But the danger isn't limited to high-rises. A Czech gymnast visiting Germany's Neuschwanstein Castle slipped from a cliff while taking a selfie, plummeting 260 feet. An Indian travel influencer fell into a 300-foot gorge at a waterfall while filming content. A man in China drowned when a walrus he had been photographing playfully dragged him into the water. The list goes on.

Mark Griffiths, a professor specializing in behavioral addictions, likens today's selfie risk-takers to thrill-seekers of the past—storm chasers, daredevils, and extreme sports enthusiasts. "What's different now is that the reward isn't just personal adrenaline—it's digital validation. Every like, comment, and share fuels the need to push boundaries even further."

And sometimes, those boundaries prove deadly. An English hiker was struck by lightning, possibly because his metal selfie stick acted as a lightning rod. In Pamplona, a man attempting to photograph himself amid the Running of the Bulls was fatally gored. Authorities have since banned selfies during the event.

As social media pushes the limits of what's possible, there is growing criticism of those who endanger themselves—and others—for the sake of a photo. Influencer couples who post precarious stunts, like dangling over infinity pools, face backlash from concerned viewers. Yet the attention their content receives proves that risk-taking remains a powerful currency in the digital world.

In the end, no photo is worth a life. The next time you reach for your phone in a precarious spot, ask yourself: Is this really worth it? Because the most dramatic shots often come with the highest stakes—and some risks simply aren't worth taking.



In 2017, Chinese influencer Wu Yongning fell to his death from a 62-story building while filming this stunt.



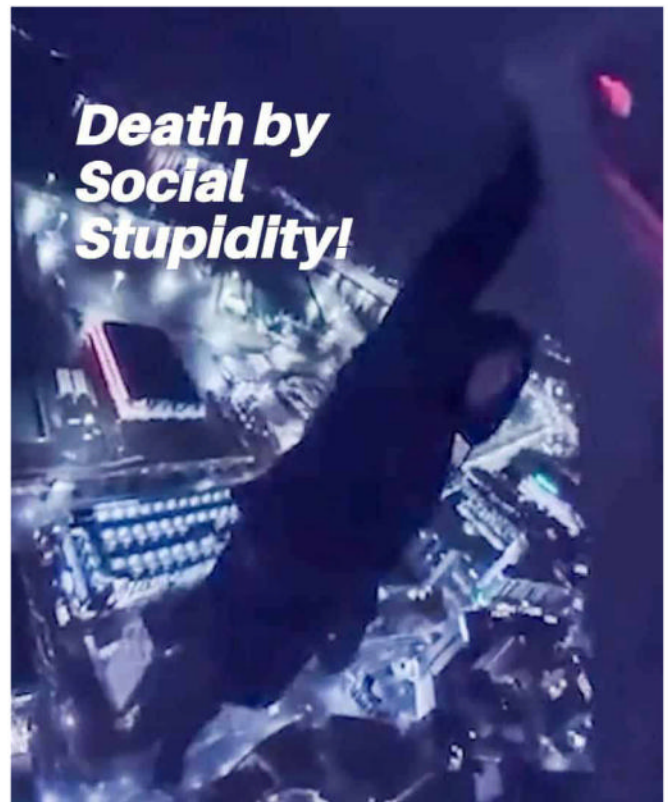
This man was spotted at the Running of the Bulls in Pamplona - he can be fined \$3000USD for endangering others by taking selfies

"As social media pushes the limits of what's possible, there is growing criticism of those who endanger themselves – and others – for the sake of a photo. So the next time you reach for your phone in a precarious spot, ask yourself: Is this really worth it? Because the most dramatic shots often come with the highest stakes – and some risks simply aren't worth taking.



Xenia Ignateva died after she climbed a railway bridge to take a selfie. She lost her balance and grabbed onto high voltage wires and was electrocuted.

In a tragic reminder, just as we were putting this magazine together, a tourist had her arms bitten off by a shark as she tried to take a selfie with it!



This 16-year-old scaled a construction site on Auckland's waterfront and dangled one-handed from the boom of a crane 200 metres above the city and shared the video on Tiktok



HARDLINE: World's toughest MB race

Hutt Valley's Erice van Leuven went head-to-head with the downhill courses in Tassie—and paid the price. The 18-year-old rising star crashed hard at Red Bull Hardline in Tasmania over the weekend, walking away with a broken neck, back, and wrist, plus internal injuries after coming up short on an 85-foot jump near the finish.



In a social media update straight after the crash, she acknowledged the gravity of her injuries but noted she was lucky to still be walking. A lung issue means she'll have to wait before flying home to New Zealand, but her spirits remain high.

Van Leuven, a two-time junior downhill world champion, was one of just eight women invited to tackle Hardline—a race designed to push even the best riders to their absolute edge. The course is stacked with 45-foot drops, gap jumps the length of a cricket pitch, and speeds north of 70 km/h just to make the landings.

Before the event, she had been putting in serious work with Norco Race Division at a training camp in Queenstown, adjusting to the sheer scale of Hardline's features.

"It's a downhill race, but with monster jumps," she told media before the race. "I love big jumps, but I've never ridden anything like this. I've hit 50-footers before, but 85 feet? That's next level."

Unlike typical downhill courses that balance jumps with technical terrain, Hardline is a pure test of speed and nerve. The jumps aren't built to send riders soaring—they're low, flat takeoffs designed for sheer velocity. And van Leuven, known for her aggressive riding style, was getting comfortable fast.

During practice, she was right there with her Norco teammate Gracey Hemstreet, who went on to take her second Hardline win. Footage showed van Leuven pushing herself, whooping with excitement as she followed Hemstreet.

Then it went wrong.

Post-crash, van Leuven shared images of herself in a neck and torso brace, her wrist in a cast, and taking cautious steps—a sight almost hard to believe given the scale of the impact.

Red Bull Hardline isn't about participation. It's designed to find the outermost limits of elite riders. This time, those limits hit back hard. But given van Leuven's track record, it's a safe bet she won't stay grounded for long.

95 DAYS ADrift:

The Incredible Survival Story of Maximo Napa

Some people push the limits of endurance by choice—climbing Everest, paddling solo across oceans, or trekking through the Arctic. Maximo Napa didn't have that luxury. His 95-day odyssey, adrift in the vast Pacific Ocean, wasn't a test of skill or ambition. It was survival, raw and brutal.

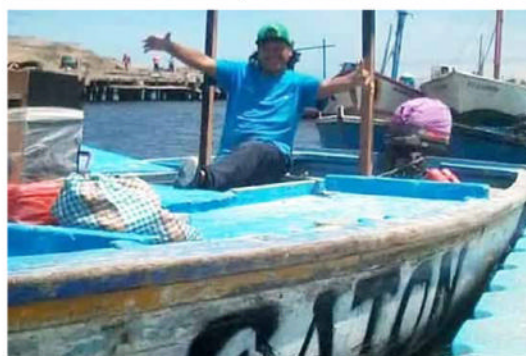
The Peruvian fisherman set off from Marcona, a coastal town in southern Peru, on December 7, expecting a routine two-week fishing trip. But the ocean had other plans. Ten days in, a fierce storm knocked his boat off course, sending him into the expanse of the Pacific. His food dwindled, his family launched a desperate search, and Peru's maritime patrols scoured the waters—but Napa had vanished.

For three months lived without certainty, without rescue. His survival diet? Whatever he could catch. Birds. Roaches. Sea turtles. He collected rainwater, but in the last 15 days before rescue, he had nothing to eat at all.

"I did not want to die," he told reporters after his dramatic rescue. His will to survive, he said, was fuelled by thoughts of his family—including his two-month-old granddaughter, whom he had never met.

Lost at sea survival stories are rare, but not unheard of. The longest known case? José Salvador Alvarenga, a Salvadoran fisherman, survived 438 days adrift in the Pacific before washing ashore in the Marshall Islands in 2014.

After nearly 100 days alone, hope came from an Ecuadorian fishing patrol. Napa 1,094 km (680 miles) off the Ecuadorian coast, barely clinging on, severely dehydrated, and in critical condition. He was rushed to Paita, near the Peru-Ecuador border.



LOST IN THE SNOW: 8 year old survives alone in wilderness

Eight-year-old Nante Niemi has a story that sounds like something out of a survivalist's handbook—except he wasn't a seasoned outdoorsman. He was a kid lost in the vast, snow-covered Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park in Michigan. For two full days, Nante battled freezing temperatures, hunger, and isolation before finally being found.

Nante and his family, who hail from Wisconsin, had been on a camping trip in the remote Upper Peninsula. While helping his grandfather and uncles gather firewood on a Saturday afternoon, he wandered off—and vanished.

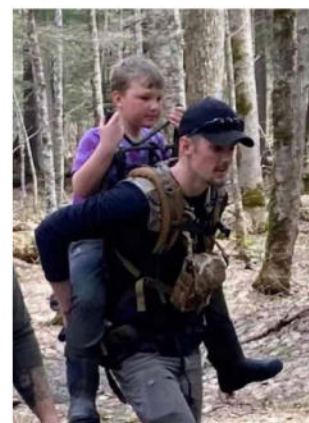
When a frantic initial search turned up nothing, the family called in reinforcements. By the time Michigan State Police Lieutenant Jason Wickstrom and his team were on the case, the search area had expanded to nearly 60,000 acres of rugged, hilly terrain. The melting snow and heavy spring rain had turned the wilderness into a maze of swollen rivers and boggy ground.

But while hundreds of searchers combed the forest, Nante was doing what he could to stay alive. "I just kept praying to be found," he later told reporters. "And I tried not to be scared."

With no food, the boy relied on snow to stay hydrated. "I eat it all the time in winter anyway," he shrugged. At one point, a rescue helicopter flew overhead, and Nante did everything he could to signal it—waving and shouting—but no luck. The chopper crew never saw him.

Finally, on Monday afternoon, searchers stumbled upon a small figure huddled beneath a log, nearly two miles from his family's campsite. When he heard his name, Nante bolted toward them. "I saw something green hanging, and then I saw a person," he said. "I ran straight to them."

Moments later, he was reunited with his family and given some much-needed food. "I had a Clif bar and a sandwich. It was really good," he grinned. Despite his ordeal, Nante hasn't lost his love for the outdoors. Asked if he'd go camping again, his answer was instant: "Yeah. Of course."



Nante was happy to see his rescuers

Image: Facebook

SURVIVING HYPOTHERMIA:

Be prepared

Many years ago now, whilst travelling in the States with my best friend, we ventured out on a day hike up into the hills in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. It was the beginning of summer, around 18 degrees Celcius, and the sun was shining. Dressed in little more than shorts, bikini tops and a cotton t-shirt, we were dropped at the start of the hike with the intention of hiking into the hills and back into town a few hours later. Due to the mild weather we carried little more than a few snacks and a wind jacket and opted to leave the rest of our gear at the backpackers in town making the walk an easy one, or so we thought. Cheerfully and naively, we set off into the hillside.

During the hike up the weather remained fine but in the dense bush we failed to notice the warning signs of the weather changing until it was too late. Within minutes (or so it seemed) the temperature dropped from 18 to 8 degrees, and we were engulfed in a fierce snow storm.

Eager to get out of the weather, and with little more in our day packs than a light weight wind jacket and an apple, we turned around and made a b-line for the backpackers (at least two hours walk away). By now the wind had picked up and walking upright was not easy. The snow had turned into a horizontal sleet and leaning into the wind and rain, we realised we were in trouble...

"Hypothermia sneaks up on you and that in itself is one of the problems. By the time you begin to notice the signs that someone has hypothermia, you really need to act quickly."

Hypothermia sneaks up on you and that in itself is one of the problems. By the time you begin to notice the signs that someone has hypothermia, you really need to act quickly.

In Aotearoa where the weather is notoriously changeable in our national parks, particularly at higher altitudes, it's crucial to know the basics about hypothermia.

Hypothermia is simply described as 'a decrease in the core body temperature to a level at which normal muscular and cerebral functions are impaired.'

So what are the signs?

The first signs of hypothermia are feeling cold and shivering, but doesn't that happen to all of us when we are exposed to wintry weather? So take notice of the following:

- Slurring speech
- Stumbling
- Shallow breathing
- Tiredness and confusion
- Desire to sit and stop

As we headed back towards "home" I seemed to be fairing a little better than my friend, who although wasn't stumbling or slurring, she was saying she was tired and wanted to stop; I could tell she was struggling...

According to St Johns organisation this is what to do if you have hypothermia:

- Move the person to shelter
- Remove wet clothing
- Wrap them in a blanket, sleeping bag or dry towel and cover the head
- Give them a warm non-alcoholic drink and some sugary food
- Keep them awake

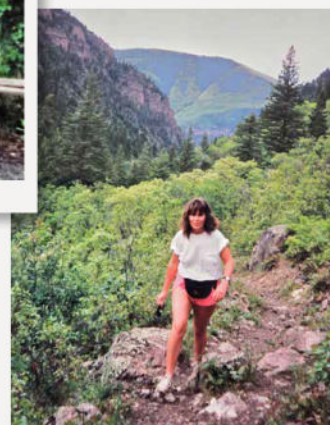


Above: The extent of our preparation - a lightweight wind jacket and an apple

Right: Helen setting out on our hike, oblivious to what lay ahead

For us there was no shelter, I had nothing to wrap her in, and no warm drink to give her, all I could do was to make sure she stayed awake and kept walking. This was a time before cell phones so I knew help was not going to come to us so we had to get to help. Leaning into the freezing rain and hailing wind we walked the two hours back, keeping my friend distracted by making her sing Cold Chisel songs with me on repeat.

We were lucky, there is no doubt about that. We made it back to town, back to shelter and warmth and after a quick trip to the doctors who reaffirmed the mild hypothermia diagnosis and a good night sleep, we were able to carry on our travels, a couple of hundred dollars worse for wear but a lot wiser.



How could we have prevented hypothermia?

As with For all outdoor activities, NZ Mountain Safety Council (MSC) says the key to preventing hypothermia is always being well prepared . Being prepared includes having the right clothing. Our nylon shorts and bikini tops were never going to cut it in anywhere but the beach.

Being prepared means not only having the right clothing and equipmentbut also being physically fit enough for the activity. The fitter you are, the less energy you burn and the less heat you lose.

MSC has these tips for preventing hypothermia.

Make a solid plan

If you have a plan, you're less likely to find yourself in a situation that could lead to you or someone in your group becoming hypothermic. Having a plan means:

- Choosing a trip that suits everyone's abilities and the conditions.
- Checking the forecast before you go and changing your plans if it looks bad.
- Setting 'decision-making points' along the way where you'll stop, check in to see how everyone is doing and reassess the conditions.

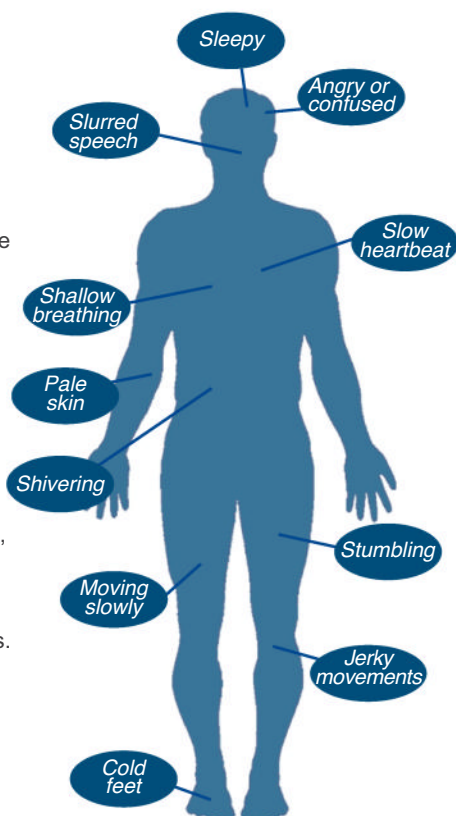
Make sure you're prepared to treat hypothermia by packing spare, warm clothes, something to insulate you from the ground, like a tarpaulin or bivvy bag, and extra food and drinks that contain sugar.

Wear the right fabrics

Leave your cotton and denim – as well as your beachwear – at home. When wet, these fabrics suck heat from your body. They're also next to impossible to dry. Clothing needs to be breathable, lightweight and, ideally, quick drying. Synthetics (like fleece and polypropylene, which are quick drying) or wool (such as merino) are ideal. These fabrics stay warm when they get wet and won't absorb moisture as much as other fabrics.

Layer your clothing - and always carry more than you think you need. Wearing multiple layers of clothing will keep you warm when the weather turns and allow you to take layers off as you warm up, so you maintain an optimal temperature, significantly reducing the chance of hypothermia.

"Make sure you're prepared to treat hypothermia by packing spare, warm clothes."



WARNING SIGNS OF HYPOTHERMIA

For a tried and tested layering system, NZ Mountain Safety Council recommends:

1. Base layer – tramping shirt or short-sleeved top.
2. Mid layer – fleece or long-sleeved woollen top.
3. Insulation layer – a synthetic or down jacket.
4. Wind- and water-proof layer – a rain jacket and trousers will protect you from the wind and rain, while gaiters will keep your feet dry.

A hat is also essential as it does a great job at regulating your temperature, while gloves will keep your hands functional. Very important!

Keep well-fed and hydrated

Food gives us the energy needed to keep warm and helps prevent hypothermia. On cooler days, you'll need more food, and hot drinks never go amiss both for warmth and the comfort factor.

Insulate

When you stop for a break, put on warm clothing (including your warm hat) immediately, rather than when you start to cool down. Once you stop moving, you'll begin to lose heat quickly, and it will be hard to get warm again, increasing the risk of hypothermia. If you sit on the ground, protect yourself from the cold with an insulating layer, like a thermal mat, your pack or a spare pack liner.

Look after yourself and each other

When you stop for breaks and at your decision-making points, check in to see how everyone is doing. Is anyone getting cold/hungry/thirsty/tired? If you catch these complaints early and manage them, you'll be helping prevent hypothermia further into the trip.

Find out more on the MSC website: www.mountainsafety.org.nz/learn/skills/first-aid



Let us take you on
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Lucy Sinclair on 'Eat Yourself Fitter 25' at Project Wall Wye Creek.
Photo Credit Guillaume Charton.

CLIMBING IN NZ:

PASSION, PROGRESS, AND YOUNG TALENT

Words and images by Sarah Hay

Bouldering's popularity has skyrocketed in recent years, drawing in climbers of all ages and backgrounds. Once considered a niche sport, climbing has evolved into a dynamic and widely recognized discipline, from indoor gyms to world-class competitions and outdoor crags. Whether it's the problem-solving nature of bouldering, the endurance of sport climbing, or the speed and precision of competition formats, more young athletes are finding their passion on the wall.

At Northern Rocks, we've seen firsthand how climbing shapes individuals—not just as athletes but as confident, resilient people. Climbing gyms have become a training ground for rising young athletes who have each carved out their own paths in the sport. Through countless hours of training, competing, and testing themselves outdoors, they embody the next generation of climbers pushing the limits of what's possible.

At last year's CNZ Youth Boulder Champs, 18-year-old Lucy delivered a standout performance, securing top finishes against seasoned competitors. Meanwhile, 17-year-old Oskar has been making waves in both indoor and outdoor climbing, pushing his limits in competitions while pursuing ambitious projects on real rock. Their journeys reflect the new generation of climbers redefining what's possible.

In this edition, we dive into what fuels Lucy and Oskar's passion—their training methods, mental strategies, and the stories behind their biggest achievements. Whether it's crushing competition boulders or tackling outdoor projects, their drive is nothing short of inspiring.



LUCY SINCLAIR: A PASSION FOR ROCK CLIMBING



"Climbing has definitely shifted my mindset. It's taught me to stay focused and patient, especially when things don't go as planned."

At just 18 years old, Lucy's journey began at the age of 7, sparked by a birthday party at an indoor climbing wall. What started as a fun activity evolved into a deep passion, driven by the physical and mental challenges climbing offers. Whether solving complex problems or finding the right beta, climbing provides a unique and rewarding experience.

Balancing indoor and outdoor climbing, this enthusiast cherishes the adventure of scaling natural landscapes while embracing the competition and skill-testing of indoor walls.

Climbing 4-5 times a week, Lucy's goals shift with the seasons—preparing for competitions during the year and focusing on outdoor rock adventures in summer.

With a history of competitive climbing since 2019, including international experiences, the sport has opened doors to personal growth, lifelong friendships, and global adventures. Inspired by climbers like Oceania Mackenzie and Angie Scarth Johnson, her story reflects the dynamic and inspiring world of rock climbing.

Lucy's notable comp achievements:

2024 1st CNZ Open Boulder National Champs
2023 1st SCA AUS Youth Boulder National Champs (U18)
2023 1st CNZ Open Boulder National Champs
2023 2nd CNZ Youth Boulder National Champs (U20)
2023 IFSC Youth World Championships in Seoul
2022 1st CNZ Youth Lead National Champs (U18)
2022 3rd Australian Youth Boulder

National Champs (U18)
2022 1st CNZ Youth Boulder National Champs (U18)
2022 IFSC Youth World Champs in Dallas

Outdoor achievements:

The Resistance V10
The Possum V8
Ruled by Secrecy V8
Ape Index V8
Slim Shady 27
Moses 27

What do you find the most challenging aspect to competition climbing, and how do you overcome or work through it? One of the more challenging aspects has been the limited support available in NZ compared to other countries, especially around coaching. This was especially seen at international competitions, where I saw the extensive support some climbers had. To overcome this, I have engaged with online coaches and built a strong network, which has been important in my progression.

What are the most rewarding aspects to competition climbing, and why do you compete? The most rewarding part of competition climbing is seeing my progression. I love working toward a goal and putting in the effort to improve. The feeling of all the work paying off, especially when I perform well in a competition, is incredibly satisfying. Competing keeps me motivated and gives me something to work for.

Do you feel pressure to achieve a certain result in comps and how do you overcome the comp environment pressure, managing isolation etc? It depends on the competition, but I usually do feel the pressure; however, this mostly is pressure I've inflicted on myself. To manage the pressure, I focus on my preparation and enjoy setting personal goals rather than focusing on the other competitors. In isolation, I like to practice certain mindful techniques, which help me stay present and focused.

Do you feel like climbing has given you a different mindset? If so, how? Yes, climbing has definitely shifted my mindset. It's taught me to stay focused and patient, especially when things don't go as planned. I've learned success isn't always immediate. This mindset has helped me approach challenges outside of climbing with a better mindset.

Climbing has definitely shaped the way I approach challenges outside of the sport. It's taught me the value of persistence and patience. In climbing, you often don't succeed on your first attempt, and you have to stay focused, adapt, and keep trying. This mindset has carried over into other areas of my life.

Describe an outdoor adventure or climb that has stuck out in your memory, what happened? Thinking about bouldering up the Hooker Valley in Mt Cook always makes me smile. You walk up the valley for an hour on a narrow path with thousands of tourists walking the trail with their selfie sticks. It's funny trying to get past with my stack of bouldering pads while also having to explain every few minutes what the pads are for!

What advice would you give to someone younger or new to climbing? Don't be afraid to ask questions, I've found the climbing community is generally really friendly and keen to help.



OSKAR WOLFF: FROM LOCAL WALLS TO GLOBAL HEIGHTS: A CLIMBER'S JOURNEY OF EXCELLENCE

Oscar's notable comp achievements:

2016 - 2023 1st CNZ National Boulder Champs Youth D, Youth C, Youth A, Junior, Open categories
2021 & 2023 NIBS Overall Open Champion
2019 23rd Overall World Youth Champs Arco: Lead, Boulder & Speed Youth B
2022 29th World Youth Champs Texas, Boulder

Outdoor achievements:

First V11 at age 13yrs
V11 Peak Lime - flash
V12 Fatal Discharge age 14 yrs
Immortal Technique (32) - second ascent age 15yrs
V13 Chuck Yeager - first ascent
V13 Spelunking - first ascent
V14 Disorder - first ascent

Oskar's competitive and outdoor achievements are impressive. Starting his climbing journey at age 10 years at Hangdog in Lower Hutt, this climber was immediately captivated by the mental challenges of the sport, valuing finesse and forward-thinking over sheer physicality. His passion for self-reliance and personal growth fueled his success in both competitive and outdoor climbing. Oskar is studying Computer Science at Otago University and also working part time.

Oskar dominated CNZ Youth Bouldering competitions from ages 10 to 18 years, winning every championship. He claimed National Indoor Boulder Series (NIBS) Champion titles in 2021 and 2023, and became CNZ Open Boulder Champion in 2022 and 2023.

Internationally, Oskar ranked 23rd overall at the 2019 Arco Youth World Champs (YWCH) and placed 29th in bouldering at the 2022 Dallas YWCH.

Outdoors, his achievements include climbing V11 at 13 years, sending V14 and claiming the first ascent on 'Disorder', and establishing Chuck Yeager V13, the North Island's hardest boulder. Oskar's relentless drive also led to a remarkable trip to Rocklands, South Africa, where he climbed 41 boulders graded V10 or harder in just two and a half weeks.

How did you first get into rock climbing? What do you enjoy most about it?

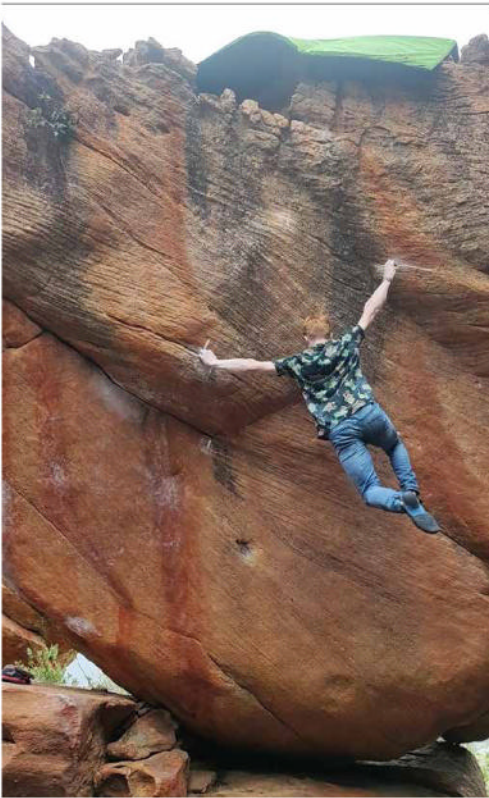
I first got into climbing when I was 10 at Hangdog in Lower Hutt. The main thing that stood out to me about climbing when I first tried it was how it wasn't about physicality. I saw quite soon how climbing was majority a mental game and not a physical one. Having finesse and forward thinking helped much more than having huge biceps and shoulders. It was also such a thrill to be up high on a wall where you are only relying on yourself to get up there. The fact that it was an individual sport really appealed to me. This meant that if you did really well or screwed up really bad, you only had one person to blame. This allows for self-reflection of seeing how you progress overtime and ironing out your own weaknesses.

Do you have a preference between indoor and outdoor climbing? Why?

I definitely prefer outdoor to indoors. To me outdoor climbing is such a different sport to indoors as it is both more physical and more of a mental game. Having to consider conditions, skin, bad landings, sharp holds, difficult approaches etc makes it a more complex process than indoor climbing. It also makes it much more interesting and engaging as you will get more styles of climbing, different rock types and an infinite possibility of movement whereas indoors you are more limited to the setters vision and manufactured holds. In outdoor climbing your own perception/vision dictates much more how you will climb something. This idea of vision also comes into play when trying to figure out something no one has done before.

How often do you go climbing, and what types of goals do you set for yourself?

I go climbing around 5 times a week on average. I try to get outdoors at least once a week but mostly when I'm not on long trips I am training indoors. My training mostly consists of board climbing and spray wall circuits. I don't currently have any specific goals except to keep certain injuries at bay by doing regular exercises and build more endurance on the circuit wall.



"My joy in climbing though comes more from the lifestyle that surrounds it. Usually on an outdoor trip you are travelling somewhere absolutely stunning with some of your best friends. Morning's are full of banter, excitement and psych for the day ahead."



Do you participate in climbing competitions? If so, how has that experience been? I have competed for just about a decade now and it has been a mixed bag. Competitions have changed drastically throughout the years and the style of climbing 10 years ago is almost incomparable to what it is now. In the past 5 years competitions have gotten further and further away from outdoor rock climbing to the point where today's comp boulders look more like modern art abstractions than a boulder problem. I do enjoy the novelty of the climbs set today but these boulders tend to be more party tricks and parkour than I would like. Competitions are great for what they are and the publicity they attract but for me there is not enough money in it for it to be possible anymore. It seems no matter what level you are in competition climbing, there is never enough money to make a living out of it.

What are your notable achievements from outdoor climbing? In 2018 at the age of 13 I climbed my first V11 at Turakirae Head. A couple of weeks later just after my 14th birthday I climbed Fatal Discharge V12. About a year later I made the second ascent of one of the hardest routes in the North Island, Immortal Technique 32 at the age of 15. In 2021 I made the first ascent of Chuck Yeager V13 which is still the hardest established boulder in the North Island. In more recent times I sent my first V14, Disorder, which was a first ascent. On the same trip I also first ascended many other boulders, including Spelunking V13. I also flashed Peak Lime V11. Last year I went to Rocklands, South Africa where I sent 41 boulders graded V10 or harder in 2 and a half weeks. This included 3 V13's, Sky, El Corazon and The Arch. I also flashed a V11, Deep Turtle on this trip.

What types of climbing do you prefer - powerful boulders, crimping slabs, long sport routes, dynamic boulders.. ? I tend to prefer boulders/routes that have interesting/technical movement while also being quite flowy. I typically enjoy any style of climbing as long as it ticks those boxes. My stronger style of climbing is definitely slightly overhung to around 50 degrees steep. Anything that involves lots of body tension and power I will excel in. I would say overall I'm a pretty well-rounded climber with the exception of long endurance routes as I am more of a boulderer.

What are the most rewarding aspects to climbing? What is your joy in climbing? I would say the most rewarding aspect in climbing is the process of doing a first ascent. The process is so unique to each climb you do and it's a different experience every time. Finding something which you are unsure if it is possible or not. Cleaning the holds up and getting a vague sense of how it might go and then slowly figuring it out over multiple sessions. It goes from being just another boulder into something you know top to bottom in every detail. The process always has a sense of journeying into the unknown as when you start you really have no clue if it's all there or not. Sometimes you figure it out and sometimes it turns out impossible, which is all part of it. Finishing off a project like that is one of the most incredible feelings in both climbing and life in general. My joy in climbing though comes more from the lifestyle that surrounds it. Usually on an outdoor trip you are travelling somewhere absolutely stunning with some of your best friends. Morning's are full of banter, excitement and psych for the day ahead. The anticipation around trying particular projects you've dreamed of and when you're there, getting to share the experience with your friends. Trying climbs together creates a sense of comradeship and community that is unique to the sport. At the end of the day when you've done some hard problems and everyone is knackered, you make some good food and reminisce on the sends from the day and speculate on what to do tomorrow. Times like those are truly what make me happy in life.

What has been one stand out experience through your climbing journey so far? Could be a climb or project, coaching, competitions, outdoors.. My most recent first ascent of Disorder V14 was the most special moment I've had in climbing. This was one of the first outdoor boulders I saw on video and was one that stuck with me for many years. It was only until recently that I tried it and managed to do it in 2 sessions.

How often do you get to go outdoor climbing? What are you working on or goals at the moment? Where do you climb? My next outdoor grade goals would be 33 and V15. I have been searching around for hard projects for a long time and have not found any projects at the V15 level yet as there are none established in NZ. As for the lead goal I will be trying to send Colossus 33 on my next outdoor trip down to Milford. There is also a local project in Dunedin which I'm close on that will be around 34-35.

How important is outdoor crag preservation and what steps do you take to preserve access? For me in particular the preservation of Castle Hill boulders is very important. The rock there is quite soft and polishes fast which means cleaning with a spray bottle and plastic brush is necessary. I am always encouraging people to clean their climbs after they try and to even give climbs that they haven't tried a wash if they look dirty.

INSTINCT FAMILY



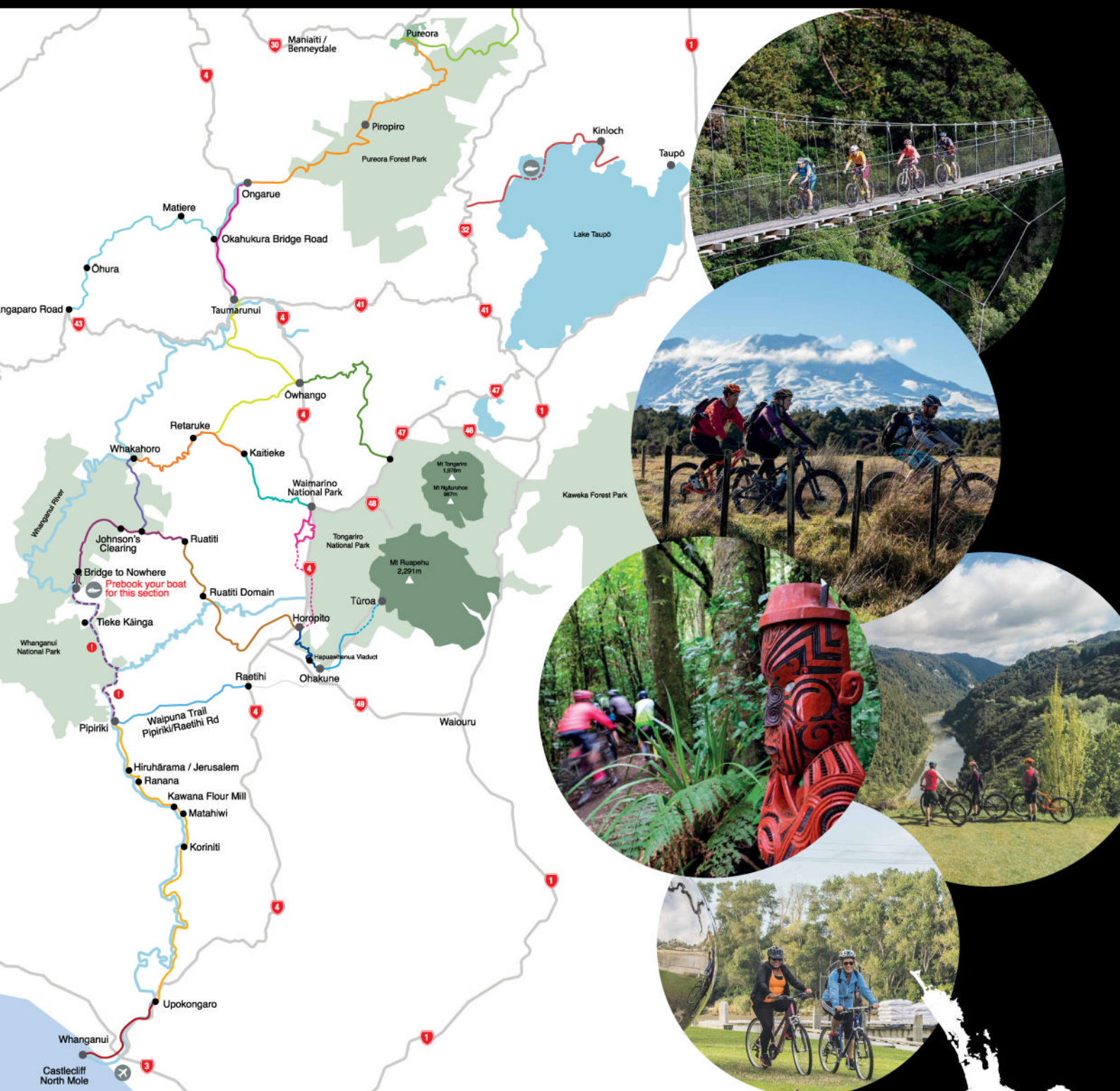
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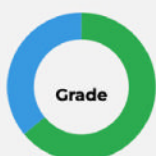


TIMBER TRAIL

MORE THAN JUST A GREAT RIDE



Some trails linger on your bucket list for years; the Timber Trail Great Ride was that kind of ride for me. It had been on my list for a while now, talked about, planned, postponed. It wasn't until a friend requested that we do it to celebrate her 60th birthday that we finally committed. It was a ride that delivered in every way possible; stunning landscapes, rich history, fantastic accommodation, all in all a real adventure with great friends.



Easiest: 0%
Easy: 64%
Intermediate: 36%
Advanced: 0%
Expert: 0%



Waikato

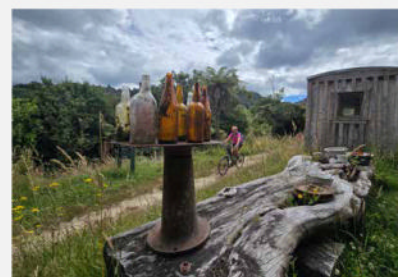
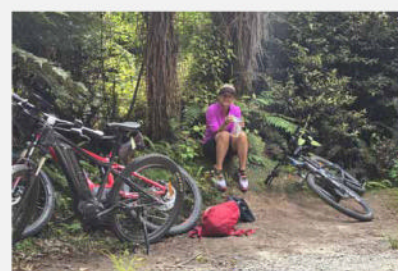
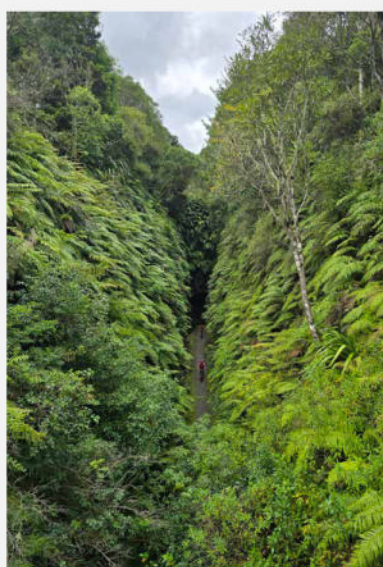


84km / 2 days

Pureora—Piropiro Flats: 40km
Piropiro Flats—Ongarue: 45km



Ancient forests
Suspension bridges
History
Warm hospitality



THE TRAIL

Situated in the heart of the King Country (Ruapehu and Waitomo), the Timber Trail is an 84 km purpose-built track winding through lush native forest, across 35 bridges—including some of New Zealand's most spectacular suspension bridges—and following the historic tramway routes of early logging operations. Fully completed in 2013, it's now considered one of the country's top multi-day rides, and for good reason.

Most riders start at Pureora and finish in Ongarue, making it a one-way trip. The smart move? Leave your vehicle in Ongarue and take a shuttle to the start. The three key access points, Pureora, Piripiri (midway), and Ongarue, allow for flexibility in ride length, but the full two-day journey is the way to go.

The Timber Trail is rated Grade 2-3, a mix of 36% easy and 64% intermediate. Don't let the grading put you off, it just means you'll need to take a little care on some sections and put in a bit of effort on the climbs. With a reasonable level of fitness, it's manageable, and for those who want an easier ride, the trail is e-bike friendly.

DAY ONE: INTO THE WILDERNESS

From the Pureora car park, the track winds through ancient podocarp forest before a gradual 15 km ascent to the highest point, 971 metres. The climb was steady so we barely noticed it. Information boards along the way offer an insight into the area's rich history, native flora, and prolific birdlife.

Near the summit, a side track leads to the top of Mt Pureora (1,135 m). The 1.5-hour return hike rewards you with panoramic views, but with 40 km of riding ahead, we opted to keep rolling. Post-summit, glimpses of Lake Taupō flicker through the trees before reaching the first of eight impressive suspension bridges. The longest on day one stretches 115 metres, an engineering marvel worth pausing for if heights don't faze you.

We made a point to stop regularly, not just for snacks and to check in on each other, but to soak in the scenery. It's easy to keep your head down while riding and miss the sheer beauty.

Despite being relatively easy, we weren't exactly well-prepared. A couple of short training rides were all we had done, and by the 39 km mark, our seats were paying the price. Enter the Timber Trail Lodge, a very welcome sight. Purpose-built in 2017, it's got everything a rider could want: bike washing stations, charging ports, bag transfers, secure storage, and most importantly, warm hospitality, great food, and comfortable rooms. Staying here turned out to be one of the highlights of the trip.



Well-rested and well-fed, we set off on the final 45 km to Ongarue. The trail changed character, offering more open sections with stunning views of the surrounding hills before reaching the Maramataha Bridge, New Zealand's third-longest suspension bridge at 141 metres long and 53 metres high. Standing on it, you get a real sense of the scale of the terrain.

One of the standout moments was riding through moss-covered cuttings, where steep banks draped in green created a surreal, almost prehistoric atmosphere. Then came the Ongarue Spiral, an engineering feat where the trail loops over itself via a tunnel and bridge, a legacy of the region's logging past.

NEED TO KNOW

- Timber Trail Shuttle & Bike Hire - Shuttles, bike hire, and bag transfers to the lodge.
- Epic Cycle Adventures - Another excellent shuttle and hire service.

- Timber Trail Lodge - Fully catered, purpose-built for riders.
- Camp Epic - Camping and glamping options.
- Black Fern Lodge & The Forge - Self-catering lodges for those preferring to go at their own pace.

- Wairere Farm Cottage (Airbnb) - A great pre-ride base, just five minutes from the shuttle pickup.
- Timber Trail Lodge & Shuttle Service - Well-organised, efficient, and incredibly accommodating. Staying here made the experience even better.

The Timber Trail isn't just a Great Ride, it's an experience. The mix of history, scenery, and a well-built trail makes it one of New Zealand's best. Whether you're a seasoned rider or just looking for a rewarding adventure, put this one on your list. And then don't wait too long to tick it off.



40//WHERE ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS/#249



BAD ADVICE IN THE ABEL TASMAN

GETTING OFFSIDE WITH THE BARK BAY GANG

Words and images by Eric Skilling



Although the Coastal and Inland Tracks lie alongside each other in Abel Tasman National Park, the two journeys couldn't offer more different experiences. The seaside path along beautiful bays is the undisputed glamour event of the New Zealand hiking experience. Many of the hikers undertaking this adventure wear makeup. Sometimes even the girls. As they pass you by, a wave of sweet perfume takes you back to a gift shop in the local mall. Meanwhile, high up on the ridges further inland, adventurers on that trail leave a stream of, let's say, more natural odours.

Late in the afternoon, alongside the golden sand beaches, travellers enjoy a swim, and a freshwater shower. They then change into clean attire before settling down to dinner. Up higher, in the more challenging terrain, changing undies anytime over the entire three-day journey is generally considered unnecessary.

Coastal walkers can expect a wide, graded, and well-signposted trail following along contour lines. Signage at every intersection provides generous time-to-travel estimates to onward destinations. Each estimate allows for stops to view local wildlife, and to take photos. You will enjoy seeing young couples carrying wide-eyed toddlers strapped into backpacks.

Other parents, loaded with heavy packs, lead an energy of young children. The young ones scamper from one new fascination to another, calling loudly to each other. More elderly folk, fresh off the water taxi, meander past, chatting away. It is inspiring to see so many people enjoying this wonderful place.

Hundreds of metres above, deep within the lush forests of the Inland trail, I passed one other couple during a three-day excursion. For one thirty-six-hour period, I never saw another human soul. There are eroded gullies to negotiate. Treefall and rocks to clamber over and around. Mud to trudge through. Trampers keep a wary eye open for the reassuring yellow track markers nailed into tree trunks, confirming they are not lost. Nevertheless, significant upsides promise a different but also remarkable experience.

Covid, cancelled leave, and a family issue combined, and I found myself stepping through the spectacular archway at Marahau on my own. Alone. Just me. By myself. But don't feel bad - the weather was perfect for the entire five days, and I had a good time.

Initial plans included taking two days to reach the northern end of the Coastal track. After taking time out to enjoy a barista coffee at Awaroa, I would try the three-day journey along the Inland track

back to Tinline Bay. I had no idea how quickly those plans would change, or the dramas that awaited at my first stop.

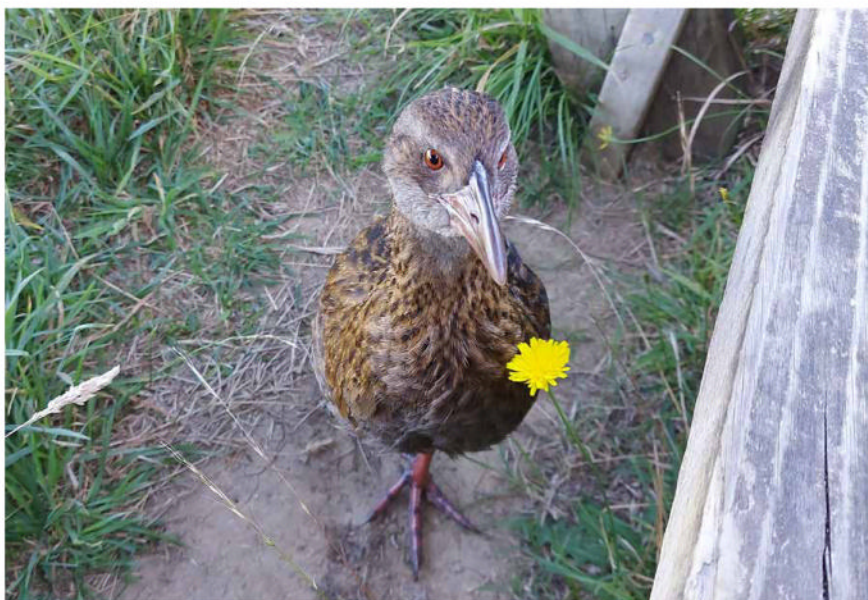
Firstly, I somehow declared war against the wily weka – the Bark Bay gang! And yes – I lost. Arriving at the beautiful Bark Bay campsite mid-afternoon, I was soon enjoying a refreshing swim. After showering, I returned to my campsite to find someone chasing two weka away from my pack. Thankfully, there was no obvious damage to my stuff, and nothing was missing. I would only discover the true damage three days later.

Flightless, standing on two powerful-looking legs, and with their dark colouring, you could be forgiven for suggesting these endangered birds are related to our national bird, the gentle kiwi. They are not.

While the kiwi has not yet adapted to a world full of humans, weka have screamed up the evolutionary ladder. Weka means "inquisitive" in Te Reo Māori, which dangerously underrates their craftiness.



Warnings at Bark Bay



Weka on the prowl... don't be fooled by it's cute looks

"Personally, I can't decide if the weka are natural kleptomaniacs, hoarders, or bored opportunists to be admired for their determination."

With the skill of a professional pickpocket, the arrogance of a falling brick, and the speed of striking cobra, the weka will rapidly relieve anyone of anything unpacked or unprotected.

Personally, I can't decide if the weka are natural kleptomaniacs, hoarders, or bored opportunists to be admired for their determination. They certainly have a penchant for Backcountry meals – the slightest rustle of the blue packaging attracted instant interest. The leader of the gang at Bark Bay has endured childhood trauma and now suffers from an irrepressible urge to keep everything neat and tidy. Anything out of place, regardless of how inedible or useless it might be, is snatched and despatched. This might include, for example, clean cutlery placed on a table while you drink your coffee. I do not see how these tools are useful to a bird – it doesn't have hands! I do know, however, that somewhere, hidden within the confines of Bark Bay, there is a huge store rivaling the largest K-Mart.

War raged into the afternoon. Weka advancing, me yelling and throwing small sticks in their direction – admittedly not at them as amazingly, they are an endangered species. By early evening I realised they must be territorial. Desperately, I grabbed a larger stick and scratched a line in the sand around my campsite. I then marked my territory by dragging a sweaty sock along the line. Amazingly, it seemed to work. They wandered off in another direction. I confidently grabbed my empty water bottles and headed for the camp kitchen. I returned to find some kind stranger chasing two weka off the picnic table at my campsite.

Shortly afterward I received well-intentioned, but poor advice. While discussing my plans with fellow campers, they said the Inland track had been neglected and was in poor condition. Washouts caused by cyclone Gabrielle had not been repaired. Without saying it, they obviously believed I should avoid the trail, especially as I was on my own.

Later, after reflection, I reluctantly contacted friends to let them know my plans had changed. I planned to retrace my steps back to Torrent Bay the next day where I would camp the night. The following day I would try the six-hour section to Castle Rocks hut. This route allowed time to turn back to the coast if the track became impassable or dangerous. Unfortunately, and most disappointingly, I would miss out on a barista coffee at Awaroa.

Soon after daylight on day three, I had packed away a pole, strapped on my gators, and loaded an extra litre of water. Within metres of stepping off the coastal track, the path narrowed and steepened. The bush closed in over me and I searched for the yellow track markers. However, within minutes, kanuka had replaced the lush forest, the trail itself had levelled off, and an obvious track led upwards. A cloudless blue sky contrasted stunningly with the lush green ridges ahead.



Bark Bay Campsite, home of the Weka Gang



A quiet, clean and snug Holyoake Shelter

After a few hours I reached Holyoake shelter, 700 metres above Tasman Bay. I felt a little frustrated. If the track grading system for tramps was similar to the mountain biking system, this trail would be a two or three, not the extreme five advised earlier. My irritation soon evaporated with the amazing views, tranquillity, and perfect weather. Sitting on the deck of the shelter, hot coffee in hand, munching on those delicious Weka Bites, the view stretched across the bay to the peaks of Richmond Range and Marlborough Sounds. All is good.

Everything changed on the seven kilometres to Castle Rock hut. Scrub and fern covered a narrow track. Uprooted trees, minor slips and boulders needed to be scrambled over or around. There was even mud. The pace slowed from around three kilometres an hour to less than two.

There were upsides. Bellbirds, robins, and tui called from the trees, and piwakaka flittered from branch to branch ahead of me. Dense mixed podocarps replaced the hard, scrubby kanuka groves. Later, deeper into the bush, I walked amongst huge, mature beech trees, with the sound of waterfalls in the distance.

Around midday, I found myself in a small, fern-filled gully. I stopped for lunch. I opened a second pack of wraps and discovered a large hole in the bag. Weka! The Bark Bay gang had struck. I stared in dismay. Three days of lunches were reduced to a few mangled bits of wrap lying in the corners of the packet. A few expletives later, I angrily scooped the peanut butter with my spoon, layered it on a small slab of cheese, and bit into it. I tried to yell "Yeah, can't get me you flightless, thieving wonders" but my tongue was stuck to the roof of my mouth.

Even considering my lunch stop, the journey to Castle Rock hut took me a half an hour longer than advised. The times recommended on the Inland track do not allow for photo stops. The route would be quite challenging in poor weather, but as someone said "I have been on a lot worse". The other attraction of the route is so few people traverse it. During my trip, I met one couple as they stopped briefly at Castle Rock on their way to Moa Shelter. While the trail is a step up from Coastal Track, any experienced trampler would enjoy three days on the Inland track. I left determined to return and take on the full Inland route.

I prefer to use Backcountry, Jetboil, Merrell, and Macpac products

"I stopped for lunch. I opened a second pack of wraps and discovered a large hole in the bag. Weka! The Bark Bay gang had struck. I stared in dismay. Three days of lunches were reduced to a few mangled bits of wrap lying in the corners of the packet."



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Photo: Mountain Equipment

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L-R: Peter and his sister Gina / Peter in competition at the Thredbo Aussie Titles Giant Slalom Event circa 1985/6. "I swapped my Aussie suit with Jack Millers (USA) for a bit of fun." / Still with his sister by his side, Calgary 1988

THE XTM JOURNEY

BUILDING AN ADVENTURE BRAND WITH HEART

At 61, Peter Forras has built more than just an outdoor brand—he's fostered a culture, a purpose, and a legacy rooted in the mountains. As the founder of XTM Performance, he's not just the man behind the gear; he's the mentor shaping future leaders, the custodian of company values, and the driving force behind a business that balances function, style, and sustainability. But getting here wasn't easy.

Peter Forras' life has been defined by the mountains. A former Olympic alpine skier (Calgary 1988), he grew up immersed in mountain sports, driven by a deep European family heritage in skiing and touring. His passion for the snow led him to found XTM, a brand built on authenticity, performance, and a commitment to the sport.

For 18 years, XTM has been an official supplier to the Australian Winter Olympic Team, supporting both elite athletes and grassroots talent. The brand's ethos, Cross The Mountain, reflects Forras' belief in pushing limits—whether on the slopes or in life. It's about resilience, adventure, and respect for the outdoors.

Beyond performance, Forras has instilled a strong sense of responsibility in XTM. The Heat the Homeless initiative donates jackets to those in need, reinforcing the brand's commitment to both people and the planet. At its core, XTM is about more than just gear—it's about embracing the mountains, overcoming challenges, and always keeping the spirit of adventure alive. This is his story and the brand XTM

Forras is described by those who know him well as driven, competitive, and sometimes selfish (but in a good way)—in a way that fuels his ambition rather than hinders it. But at his core, he is kind, supportive, and fiercely loyal to his team and values.

Finding a Niche in a Crowded Market

Launching an outdoor apparel brand in an industry dominated by giants is no small feat. But Forras saw a gap: a company that was great to deal with, servicing the entry to mid-level segment of the snow industry. That vision became XTM, and he threw everything into it—literally.

To fund XTM's first production run, Forras sold his 50% stake in Rojo, a company he co-owned, and put every dollar he had into the business. He even leveraged the small equity in his house to secure a line of credit against stock. Risky? Absolutely. But Forras believed in what he was building, and he wasn't about to let doubt get in the way.

The Hardest Part: Earning Trust

Breaking into an industry dominated by well-established brands meant convincing retailers to take a chance on XTM. "Retailers already had suppliers they trusted," Forras recalls. "Getting them to move from who they were currently dealing with—that was our biggest challenge."

There were moments when he thought the business might not make it. "It's happened more times than I can count," he admits. But each time, he went back to the basics: creating high-quality products and delivering exceptional customer service. That philosophy kept XTM on track, and over time, it earned the trust of retailers and customers alike.





XTM founders, Gary Rae, Pete Forras and Bill Dalton on an early road show / XTM Head Office, Torquay, Vic, Australia

"If I had one bit of advice for anyone who is keen to launch their own adventure brand, I would say have a clear vision of what you want it to be, pick a narrow niche, and go after it with every cell in your being."

What Sets XTM Apart?

Authenticity. XTM isn't just another brand capitalizing on the outdoor lifestyle—it was born in the mountains. Forras' deep connection to the alpine world runs in his blood. His family has a long history of making a life out of mountain sports, and Forras himself competed in alpine skiing at the 1988 Calgary Olympics. "Everything we do at XTM originates from those deep, snowy roots," he says.

That heritage has shaped XTM's approach to gear. From alpine gloves to thermals made with Australian Merino wool, every product reflects a genuine understanding of what adventurers need. The brand has since expanded into technical garments, rainwear, and mid-layers—designed not just for winter but for year-round outdoor pursuits.

Balancing Performance and Sustainability

Sustainability isn't a marketing buzzword for XTM—it's a commitment that dates back to 2008, when the company first became carbon neutral. "Measuring our footprint is the first step," Forras explains. "Understanding our emissions allows us to design products that align with our emissions-cutting strategy."

That strategy includes using sustainable fabrics, Merino wool, and PFAS-free DWR treatments. XTM's head office and warehouse run on solar power, with battery backup and rainwater capture. And in 2024, the company became a certified B Corp—further cementing its commitment to responsible business practices.

Not everyone in the retail landscape has embraced XTM's sustainability stance. "There are as many believers as non-believers when it comes to climate change," Forras says. "At the end of the day, we have to balance sustainability with function, style, and cost. If the price gets too high, the consumer won't buy—killing the product before it can make an impact."

The Rise of E-Commerce and Changing Expectations

XTM has embraced the shift to direct-to-consumer sales, using its online platform to offer a full product range and gain valuable customer feedback. "E-commerce has been great

for brands," Forras says. "It allows us to interact directly with customers and share insights with our retail partners."

Consumer expectations have changed, especially among younger buyers. The 16-to-30 age group researches brands extensively before purchasing, and many refuse to buy from companies that don't align with their values. "This demographic is also shaping the future of retail," Forras notes. "And in some ways, the sooner they get to political power, the better for our planet."

The Threat of Fast Fashion

The infiltration of fast fashion into the outdoor industry is something Forras is wary of. He's seen what happened to the surf industry when the mass market moved on to the next trend. "Fast fashion is the exact opposite of what the outdoor mindset is about," he says. "It's a dangerous game."

Durability and sustainability remain at the heart of XTM's design ethos. While price competition is fierce, Forras has positioned XTM in the mid-market—offering high-quality gear at affordable prices.

What's Next for XTM?

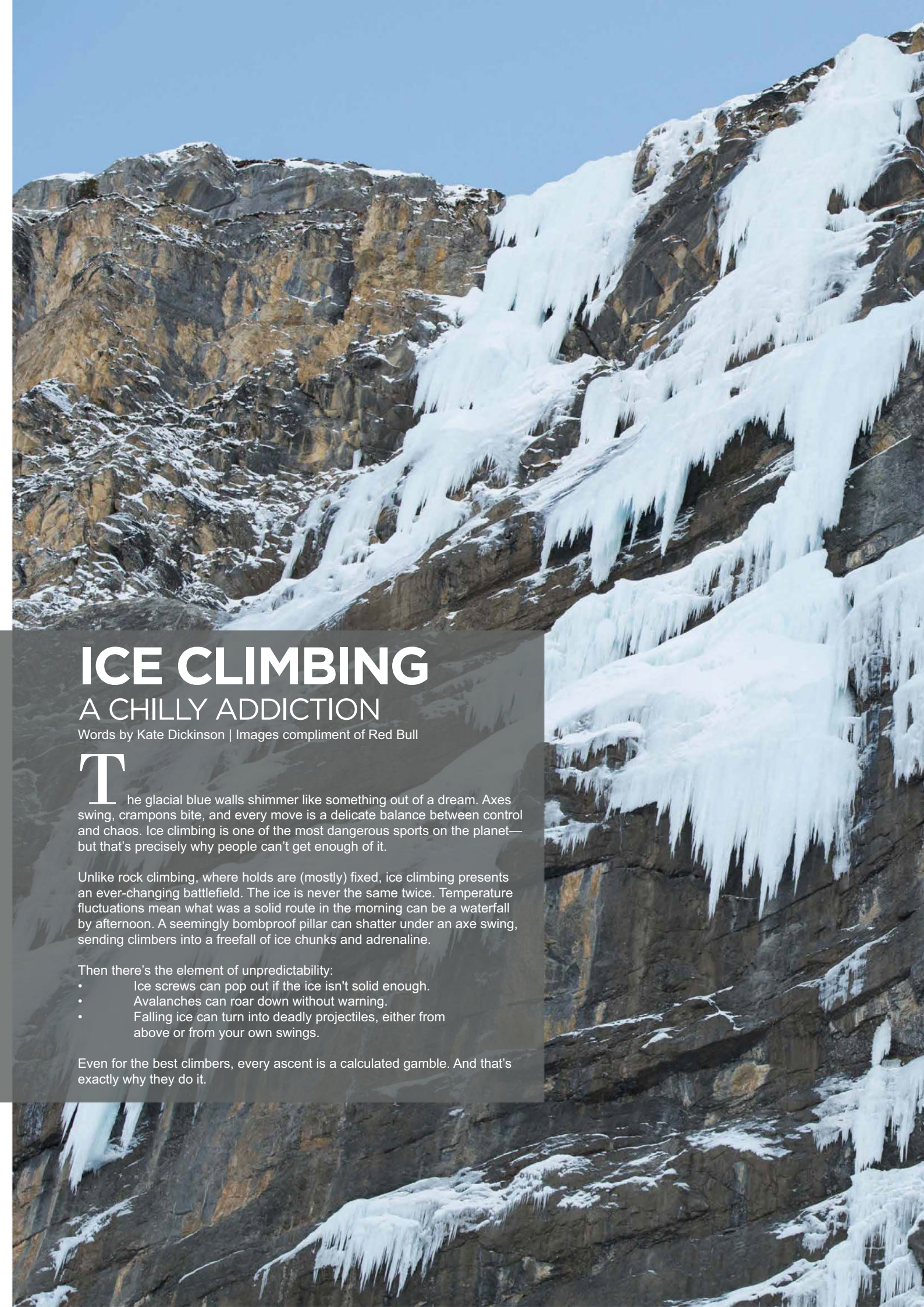
Looking ahead, Forras envisions XTM expanding into new global markets while staying true to its mission: "Do good, be free, have fun." The brand will continue refining its product lines, improving sustainability practices, and fostering a team that believes in the adventure lifestyle as much as its founder does.

For anyone looking to launch their own adventure brand, Forras offers this advice: "If I had one bit of advice for anyone who is keen to launch their own adventure brand, I would say have a clear vision of what you want it to be, pick a narrow niche, and go after it with every cell in your being. Get comfortable with discomfort, ignore the negative forces out there and surround yourself with a couple of good mentors."

That mindset built XTM. And it's the reason the brand continues to thrive in an industry where only the truly committed survive.

www.xtm.com.au





ICE CLIMBING

A CHILLY ADDICTION

Words by Kate Dickinson | Images compliment of Red Bull

The glacial blue walls shimmer like something out of a dream. Axes swing, crampons bite, and every move is a delicate balance between control and chaos. Ice climbing is one of the most dangerous sports on the planet—but that's precisely why people can't get enough of it.

Unlike rock climbing, where holds are (mostly) fixed, ice climbing presents an ever-changing battlefield. The ice is never the same twice. Temperature fluctuations mean what was a solid route in the morning can be a waterfall by afternoon. A seemingly bombproof pillar can shatter under an axe swing, sending climbers into a freefall of ice chunks and adrenaline.

Then there's the element of unpredictability:

- Ice screws can pop out if the ice isn't solid enough.
- Avalanches can roar down without warning.
- Falling ice can turn into deadly projectiles, either from above or from your own swings.

Even for the best climbers, every ascent is a calculated gamble. And that's exactly why they do it.





"The only guarantee in ice climbing is that the mountain doesn't care how experienced you are. The ice will break, avalanches will happen, and the cold will try to take its toll. The challenge isn't about conquering nature – it's about moving with it, understanding it, and, ultimately, surviving it."

Survival in ice climbing depends on a razor-sharp skill set and split-second decision-making. Unlike mountaineering, where endurance is king, or sport climbing, which rewards precision and technique, ice climbing demands all of it—plus an iron stomach.

Climbers must be able to read ice conditions, adapt their routes on the fly, and know when to back off—a lesson many have learned the hard way. Mistakes, even small ones, can have catastrophic consequences. A misplaced ice screw, a moment of hesitation, or a miscalculated swing can send climbers hurtling down jagged, frozen walls.

Cold isn't just uncomfortable—it's a serious danger. Frostbite can set in quickly when gripping ice tools for hours in sub-zero temperatures. Rope, carabiners, and gear can freeze solid, making them unreliable or impossible to use. If an accident happens,

hypothermia can set in long before help arrives, turning minor injuries into life-or-death situations.

So Why Do It?

For the same reason people base jump, free solo, or surf 20-metre waves: because it's an unmatched thrill. The rush of moving up sheer vertical ice, the sound of axes sinking into solid placements, the battle against fear—it's addictive.

There's also the purity of it. Ice climbing strips adventure down to its most primal form. There are no crowds, no noise, just the climber, the ice, and the brutal honesty of the elements. Success isn't about luck; it's about skill, grit, and knowing when to push forward and when to turn back.

Despite its risks, ice climbing has been growing in popularity. Improved gear, from lightweight ice axes to better insulation, has made the sport more accessible. Indoor ice

walls and competitions have allowed more people to train in controlled environments before heading into the wild. And social media has fueled its allure, with jaw-dropping images of climbers tackling frozen waterfalls drawing in new enthusiasts.

Still, no amount of training or high-tech gear can eliminate the risks. The only guarantee in ice climbing is that the mountain doesn't care how experienced you are. The ice will break, avalanches will happen, and the cold will try to take its toll. The challenge isn't about conquering nature—it's about moving with it, understanding it, and, ultimately, surviving it.

Ice climbing isn't for the faint of heart. It demands everything—strength, skill, knowledge, and the ability to make peace with danger. The risks are extreme, but for those who crave adventure at its rawest, it's the ultimate test.

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MOTATAPU TRAIL MARATHON

PERFECT PREPARATION

By Nick Laurie

The next race on my calendar was the Motatapu Trail Marathon. This race takes you from the outskirts of Wanaka to Arrowtown. The course follows a valley that has been used by Māori for hundreds of years to transport pounamu (greenstone) from the Queenstown region to Wanaka in the north. In the 1860s Māori guides shared this valley with gold prospectors. We would cross the Motatapu, Soho, and Glencoe high- country stations, which are opened exclusively for this event. Interestingly these sheep stations are part of Mahu Whenua which is owned by Country Music icon Shania Twain. I was sure to keep an eye out for her as we trudged through her property. It impressed me much.

My preparation for this race had been perfect. I have a longer-term goal of competing in the Routeburn Challenge in April, looking to place better in my age group. This race was going to provide a good test for race pace training with the added extra of some spectacular scenery and river crossings. My last long run had been a fortnight earlier, the 33k Coastal Challenge along the North Shore beaches in Auckland, which had turned into a 5-hour epic adventure due to surf smashing into the rocks and a high tide. My body had handled it well and recovered enough for me to knock out 21k in a tempo road run the following weekend. My legs were coiled springs, and I expected to hurt, but not die. At the end of the Coastal Challenge, I was able to chug along at a reasonable pace, so I expected to do the same here.

The gear needed for this one was an extensive list. Because we would be in remote areas if something bad were to happen, we would have to be able to keep warm while rescue equipment was shipped in. A beanie, gloves, raincoat, spare thermal top, whistle, survival bag, and a first aid kit all had to be squashed into my pack along with 5 gels and some chews. Once again, my CamelBak Apex pro served me well.

We decided to base ourselves in Wanaka, not having spent much time there previously. It is quite a cool small town, and it had a nice steak restaurant that we fuelled up at the night before the race. The vibe was very touristy with heaps of camper vans parked up on the lake front and all the restaurants were bustling. It was great to see the place doing so well. The economy looked to be on the up.

Registration for the race was extremely easy. I picked up my race number from Mt Aspiring College at am on the day of the race, where the buses to the start left from. I just sat back and checked out all the excited athletes, trying to pick who the guns were. This is almost impossible with looks being very deceiving. I can remember running past a couple of athletes whom I had figured would be extremely fast and being passed by some portly builds and some old ladies. You just do not know.

For this reason, it is always best to be very humble when talking to athletes prior to the race. I was sitting next to an Aussie girl on the bus and having done a few trail races now I am starting to fancy myself as a know it all. It turns out that she was a legendary runner having completed a hundred-kilometre race recently and regularly running the trails around Wanaka.

Steve Gurney, the Coast-to-Coast legend, has a saying: "Pain flows where the mind goes."

She must have quietly been smiling to herself as I gave a few tips. I can remember her blasting past me on the first hill mentioning that her coach had told her to walk the early hills. She obviously knew her body better and I did not see her again.

Also on the bus were a couple of long time Wanaka residents, in their 80's who were taking the opportunity to walk the trail for the first time. It was so good to see their enthusiasm and they were splendid examples of the move for life mindset.

The nervous energy on the short 30-minute bus trip to the start near Glendhu Bay was almost palpable. I do not know why I get nervous pre-race. I have chosen this. I suppose it is the fact that within the next few hours you will have almost nothing left and will be crying for your mother.

We all excitedly exited the bus and 600 people then lined up for the Portaloo's. A few sneaky characters did try to hide in the paddocks much to the start announcer's chagrin, who was under strict instructions from the farmer not to let this happen. I suppose it is not too good for the lambs to eat wee stained tussock.

We got to seed ourselves at the start and I thought that based on my previous marathon times that 4 and a half to 5 hours would be where I would end up so lined up accordingly. The initial 4-500 metres was a racy downhill section in which I found that I could keep my heart rate low while moving along at a reasonable clip.

As soon as we rounded the corner to the first steep hill on the farm track, I knew that I had made my usual mistake of going out too hard. The first climb lasted for 20 minutes and because of my haste, my heart rate exploded. I just had to slow to a walk and stride up the hill. This was not going to be my day. My big effort in the Coastal Challenge, 2 weeks earlier, was too much, too close. It was going to be a long day.

I regathered myself and got into a good rhythm listening to the banter surrounding me and taking in the beautiful scenery. So good. It was like running in the United Nations as an Irishman, Dutchman and Englishman compared experiences around me. They were truly blown away by the natural beauty and I certainly was not taking any of it for granted. To get through this, I would need to be a little conservative during the first half. We would continue climbing until the 28k mark and then head down a steep



section and across countless rivers to the finish. I set my sights on getting to the 3rd aid station at the 28K mark and then survive from there.

All 4 aid stations each were a remarkable sight. They were all manned by the most enthusiastic locals and each had a theme. I am a bit hazy on the order, but I can remember the Where's Wally theme being a hit and a welcome distraction from the grovel and the pain cave that I was in.

I remember hitting the wall at the halfway mark, way too early. I knuckled down counting the Ks to the highest point which was at 28k. I did some harsh self-talk and got myself there and settled into a good downhill rhythm keeping my mind off the pain.

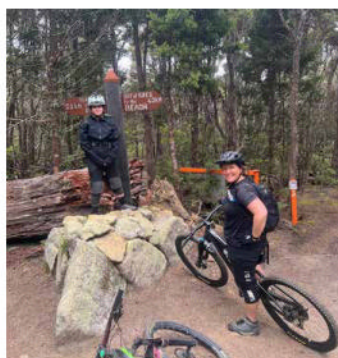
Steve Gurney, the Coast-to-Coast legend, has a saying: "Pain flows where the mind goes." I started to think about my quads as I descended these steep rutty farm tracks and at about the

30k mark I felt a sharp pain in my L quad. It came on suddenly and I thought "Holy heck! How am I going to get out of here?" I stopped, ate a gel, and then slowly tried to run again. If I kept moving, I could bear the pain and after a couple of Ks it was no longer as sharp. The body is truly amazing. Luckily while I was playing Jedi mind tricks to deal with the pain the Ks were ticking away.

At the last aid station, I still was optimistic of breaking the 5-hour barrier. I did not know that there were some serious river crossings ahead that really slowed me up. I reduced myself to a walk through these so that I did not have an impromptu swim and mentally had to battle to get running again. We came down the Arrow River even passing a guy who was panning for gold at one point. Very authentic.

I could hear the finish announcer with about 1500m to go and was desperately hoping to see the finish Shute after every corner. I had been playing the tag you are it game with a guy all the way down the hill and he passed me for the 18th time to take out our little challenge. I met Sarah at the finish and enjoyed a beautiful Emersons beer and fought off cramp. It took 2 beers for me to find some enjoyment in what I had done, and 3, to plot how I would conquer the course next year.

This is one of the best trail marathons in the country. I can see why people come from everywhere to give it a go. 8th of March 2026. I will be back.



TASMANIA

THE LAND OF CONTRASTS

One of the world's hidden gems is Tasmania. Over 10 days we explored the mountainous historic island of Tasmania and the most common phrase's we heard were "No Worries", "Too easy" and "no problem mate"! Tasmanians are a special bunch, keen to talk about their unique island, happy to share their awesome mountain bike trails and fastidious to make sure you're enjoying them as much as they do! The home of historic stone buildings, great café's, awesome coffee and fantastic wine (their craft beers are coming along too) Tasmania also has a recently built abundance of world class mountain bike trails.

We started our journey in Hobart where we picked up a Ute with an upright bike rack, perfect for a family of mountain bikers. Once we'd assembled our bikes (aided by the bike tool stand at Hobart airport) we headed to the 1271m Mount Wellington where we took in the views and warmed up on the 14km long North South trail.

This trail gets you ready for rocky flow, with some excellent structures, skinnys and a mainly down hill low through native Australian eucalyptus bush. It finishes off at Glenorchy Mountain bike park where you can knock out some jump laps if you're keen. Then after a quick stop at the supermarket it was off to Maydena Bike Park, just an hour up the road.

The brainchild of a local family, Maydena bike park opened in 2018 and has 85 trails with 850m of elevation. The trails are accessed by van shuttles or buggy shuttles. These have a multitude of drop off points, you can choose a full at the summit run, halfway point or lower tier buggy drop off. This gives you a huge choice of trail and length of run, amongst the huge 100 year old native eucalyptus and ash forest which ranges from alpine at the top to lush rain forest at the base of the mountain.

Full face helmets and body armour are highly recommended at Maydena as the trails are steep, rocky and reasonably advanced. There are a fantastic mix of flow/jump trails, steep tech and easy(ish) tech trails. A couple of awesome features of Maydena are the "Red Bull Hard line" which happens every February and attracts some of the best DH riders in the world and the "Maydena hits" a series of huge jumps on the lower mountain. At the base of the park there is an excellent bar, café and bike shop with a full range of spares, bike mechanic and top end Santa Cruise rental bikes. There isn't much in the way of retail

therapy or stores in Maydena so stock up on groceries before you get there.

After three days of gravity filled awesomeness we headed over the Tasmanian highlands to Georgetown on the Tamar River up the road from Launceston. Historic Georgetown has two small local bike parks, the larger of which is Tippogaree trails. With 60km's of singletrack and 550m of vertical, there is an abundance of rocky flow trails to sample. Shuttles run on Friday, Saturday and Sunday and are well worth turning up for as the climb is long!

There is a really good range of unique accommodation to stay at like the historic Pilot station at Low Head or one of the oldest pubs in Australia, The Peir Hotel where they served one of the largest Chicken parmo's I have ever seen. Once we'd knocked out a mellow day at Georgetown it was time to hit the legendary Blue Derby.

Another historic mining town in the middle of the Australian bush, Derby has had a renaissance since 2005 when some locals decided to start building mountain bike trails in the bush amongst the grippy rock slabs. First the Black stump trails were built in 2015, then the destination adventure trails were added such as Blue Tier, Atlas and The 41km Bay of Fires trail. With a myriad of shuttle options and 150km of trails Derby can be confusing, but we are happy to help with advice and recommendations.

We started day one with a day of Black stump shuttles. Warming up on some lower laps of "Return to sender", "Flickity Sticks" and "Air Ya Garn" before heading up one of the climbs to hit "Kingswall" and "Kushka's", we finished off with a lap of "Cuddles" to round out the day. Day two was a full First 13, Blue Tier and Atlas day. Starting with the first 13 km's of Bay of Fires, then back up to the 24 km Blue tier trail which winds

its way down to the Weldborough pub for lunch we then finished off with the best trail of all the legendary 15km Atlas which ends at the top of the Blue Derby trail network. This led us into finishing the day with the super awesome Trouty slab run back to the village for a well earned craft beer at the Lot 40 brewery.

Day three, we hit the full 41km's of the Bay of Fires trail. Starting at the same top point as the Blue Tier trail with epic views of the coast in the far distance, the Bay of Fires traverses from alpine bush through to sandy lowlands. With 1436m of descent and 713m of climb its not all down hill! The first 13 are a highlight of the trail with fast flow terrain, the middle 15km are undulating through native bush before a 6km gentle climb warms you up for the final 7km epic flow down to the coast.

Our last day was another day of Black Stump shuttles. The great thing about Derby is for a small town it punches well above its weight in terms of mountain bike services, shuttles, food and beverage. There are four really good bike shops stocking a range of hire bikes, spares and clothing. Most bike brands including Trek, Specialized, Cannondale and Santa Cruz are represented in the village.

In terms of food there is a large supermarket in Scottsdale (40 min way) and a small, well stocked grocery shop and pharmacy in Branhholm (15 min away). Derby has a couple of great pubs, a brewery, several cafes and excellent pizza at the hub. There are several accommodation options, our favourite, Hill Street Blue cabins, with wood fired hot tubs!

So if you're after an action packed mountain biking holiday, Tasmania is well set up to give you a huge variety of riding, dining and history.

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NEW ZEALAND OWNED AND OPERATED
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DEFYING THE ODDS:

Historic Atlantic row

9

7 days 9 hours and 20 minutes after leaving the shores of Portugal on the 27th October at 09:00 UTC, Zara Lachlan has made history as the first female (and youngest person) to row solo, unsupported and non-stop from mainland Europe to mainland South America.

She's only the second person in history to complete this 3600 nautical miles (4,100 miles) voyage and did so despite injuries, a broken oar, vicious weather that caused her boat to roll, encounters with Orcas and sharks – and a near collision with a larger vessel.

Zara arrived into Grand Port Maritime de la Guyane, south of Rémiré, French Guiana on Saturday 01 February where she was greeted to a hero's welcome. On her arrival, she said: "It was just incredible to see land as I approached. French Guiana is actually quite flat so I wasn't that far from the coast when I first spotted it.

"It felt like it was not only the end of the challenge but, the culmination of a longer mission to get me here, to prepare me for this challenge and then to take on the Atlantic – and make it!

"It was tough. At some points really tough. But it's in those moments you find out what you're really made of. In many ways I didn't really have a choice - I just had to grit my teeth and row.

"At the beginning of the row, one of the hardest things for me was having to clean the hull of the boat. As I'm not a great swimmer, jumping out of the boat and diving underneath it to clean it was something I dreaded. But by the end of the row, I loved it. In fact, I looked forward to a dip in the sea and was in the water every day.

"The toughest section of the voyage by far was the section through the Canaries. It felt like all of the winds and weather were against me. I was pushing hard for 21 hours a day and going just 11 miles. It was soul crushing.

"Stepping onto land after 97 days at sea was really strange. I've got so used to the motion of the boat on the water that despite the solidity of the ground – I felt like I was swaying.

"I'm not sure it's fully sunk in yet, however it goes without saying that I took on a massive challenge and won – nothing beats that feeling."

Through her challenge Zara is hoping to inspire women and girls into sport. She added; "I know it seems like an extreme way to inspire other women to get into fitness, but I want people to realise their potential and, if I can do something that I find scary then other women can attempt a challenge of their own."

On the verge of completing her physics degree at Loughborough University, Zara, will then be joining the Army, heading to Sandhurst in September to train as a technical officer.

She will be raising money for two charities through her record-breaking trip, Team Forces and Women in Sport.

Major General Lamont Kirkland, CEO Team Forces, commented: "I am absolutely delighted to celebrate Zara Lachlan's monumental achievement.

"At just 21 years old, she has become the first woman to row solo and unsupported from mainland Europe to mainland South America – a feat of incredible strength, resilience, and determination.

"Zara's success is a testament to the power of human potential and the spirit of adventure we strive to foster at Team Forces. We are exceptionally proud to have enabled Zara's expedition with the support of our sponsors.

"Zara's ground-breaking journey serves as an inspiration to us all, demonstrating that with passion and commitment, anything is possible."

However the voyage wasn't all toil and hardship, from wildlife encounters to the spectacular night skies – Zara got to experience nature in a way few will ever know. Zara added; "Before departing I was looking forward to experiencing the journey and immersing myself in nature – and it didn't disappoint.

"From Orca and Dolphins, to the breathtaking sunrises and crystal-clear night sky – there were moments where I just had to pinch myself.

"Most of the experiences were firsts for me as I'm new to ocean rowing and haven't really spent any time on the ocean before.

"The first time I ever saw a fish in the ocean was on day six of my expedition. Then on day seven when I was visited by Orca. Later on, I even got hit by a flying fish. It was quite a learning curve!

"I've made memories that I will cherish and that will stay with me for life."

She finished by saying; "None of this would have been possible without the huge amount of work and support from Team Forces. They have taken my crazy idea to take on this challenge and made it a reality. Without them I wouldn't have even made it to the start line!"

To find out more about her adventure and donate to her chosen charities, visit Zara Lachlan - Team Forces



Not as bad as you'd think

"I know it seems like an extreme way to inspire other women to get into fitness, but I want people to realise their potential and, if I can do something that I find scary then other women can attempt a challenge of their own."



21-year-old Zara Lachlan, who is self-confessed 'not a very good swimmer' - made history by rowing the Atlantic alone



THE ULTIMATE TEST:

No storm = No contest

Words and images by Red Bull

The most extreme windsurfing event on the planet is back. The Red Bull Storm Chase, an invitation-only battle against nature's raw fury, is set to return in 2025, with Denmark as the chosen battleground. But there's no fixed date, no set location—only the perfect storm will decide when and where this high-octane contest will unfold.

The Ultimate Test of Storm Sailing

Eight of the world's elite storm sailors stand ready, waiting for the call. To earn a spot on the roster is a badge of honour, a recognition of skill, courage, and the ability to harness chaos itself. Winds exceeding 100 km/h, monstrous swells, and airborne jumps defying gravity—this is where windsurfing meets survival.

The waiting period is now officially open year-round, ensuring that when Mother Nature delivers the ultimate storm, the Red Bull Storm Chase will be ready to ride it. With no predetermined season or month, the contest operates on pure instinct and meteorological precision.







What You Need to Know:

- **The Format:** Riders will be judged primarily on their jumps and wave-riding prowess, with cutting-edge 3D tracking technology capturing jump height, width, G-force, and airtime.
- **The Line-Up:** Potential competitors include past contenders such as Germany's Philip Köster, Brazil's Marcilio Browne, and Venezuela's Ricardo Campello, with Spain's Marc Paré also in the mix.
- **The Legacy:** The last Red Bull Storm Chase took place in 2019 in Magheraroarty, Ireland, where Australia's Jaeger Stone claimed victory, edging out German powerhouses Philip Köster and Leon Jamaer.
- **The Timeline:** The competition window remains open indefinitely. The event could last one or two days, depending on the storm's intensity and longevity.
- **Safety First:** A highly experienced crew on both land and water ensures athlete safety in these treacherous conditions.

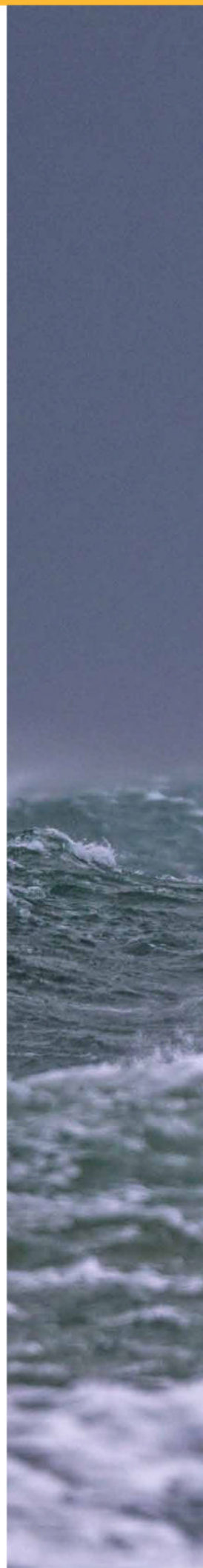
No storm? No contest. This event doesn't settle for anything less than the absolute limit of what's possible in windsurfing.



Previous page: Ricardo Campello of Venezuela taking the drop at one of the previous Red Bull Storm Chase competitions in Magheraroarty, Ireland. Image by John Carter / Red Bull Content Pool

Above: Philip Köster of Germany at the Red Bull Storm Chase in Magheraroarty, Ireland in 2019. Image by Sebastian Marko / Red Bull Content Pool

Right: Ricardo Campello of Venezuela holding on at the Red Bull Storm Chase in Italy. Image by Sebastian Marko / Red Bull Content Pool





SAFETY EQUIPMENT

YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE

Each year, search and rescue teams are deployed to locate missing hikers, hunters, climbers, kayakers, dog walkers anyone who goes outdoors. In 2023-2024 over 600 rescues were implemented by Land Search and Rescue. Even with the best preparation, the outdoors presents unpredictable challenges.

One of the most effective safety measures is also the simplest: informing someone of your plans.

When no one knows your route or expected return time, delays in raising the alarm can have severe consequences. By sharing your itinerary with a trusted contact, you provide critical information that can assist search and rescue (SAR) efforts if needed.

What Information to Share

Before setting out, take a few minutes to provide essential details to a family member, friend, or local authorities. Key information includes:

- Planned route – Specify trails, huts, or campsites.
- Expected return time – Provide a realistic timeframe for your return.
- Group details – Share the names, ages, and experience levels of your party.
- Emergency contacts – Ensure authorities can reach someone if necessary.
- Equipment list – Mention survival gear, locator beacons, and first aid supplies.

Tools That Enhance Safety

- Modern technology has improved backcountry safety, but traditional precautions remain essential. Consider carrying:
- Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) or Satellite Messengers – Devices like the Garmin inReach allow for emergency SOS signaling and location tracking.
- New Zealand Outdoors Intentions Form – Available through AdventureSmart and the Department of Conservation (DOC), this official record helps authorities locate missing adventurers.
- Mobile Phones with Emergency Text Capabilities – Recent upgrades in mobile coverage allow for texting in remote areas, but a phone should never replace a PLB.

Updating Plans

If you decide to change your route or extend your trip, updating your contact is essential. A simple message can prevent unnecessary SAR operations and ensure someone remains aware of your whereabouts.

Regardless of experience level, the wilderness is unpredictable. A quick conversation or message before departure can be the difference between a swift rescue and a prolonged emergency.

Emergency Survival Kit: Essential Gear for Any Scenario

A well-packed survival kit can determine whether an unexpected setback is an inconvenience or a crisis. Whether hiking in the Southern Alps, kayaking remote fiords, or navigating rugged backcountry, carrying the right gear is essential. Here's what you need—and why it matters.

1. Shelter, Warmth, and Protection

Survival priorities follow the "Rule of Three": humans can survive three minutes without air, three hours without shelter in extreme conditions, and three days without water.

- Emergency Bivvy or Space Blanket – Lightweight, reflective, and essential for heat retention.
- Waterproof Matches and Firestarter – Fire provides warmth, light, and a psychological boost. Pack waterproof matches, a lighter, and a firestarter.
- Tarp or Emergency Shelter – Protection from wind, rain, or snow is crucial in an unexpected overnight situation.

2. Water and Purification

Dehydration impairs judgment and endurance quickly.

- Water Filtration System or Purification Tablets – Streams may appear clean, but bacteria and parasites pose risks.
- Collapsible Water Bottle or Hydration Bladder – Allows for efficient collection and storage.

3. Food and Energy

Hunger won't kill you immediately, but low energy affects decision-making and mobility.

- High-Calorie Energy Bars – Compact and designed for sustained energy.
- Dried Nuts and Jerky – Provide protein and fat for longer-lasting fuel.

4. First Aid and Medical Supplies

Injuries are unpredictable, and immediate care is often required.

- Compression Bandage – Essential for sprains, strains, and wound care.
- Antiseptic Wipes and Ointment – Prevent infections from minor cuts and blisters.
- Painkillers and Antihistamines – Treat common issues like headaches, allergic reactions, and inflammation.
- Tweezers and Tick Remover – Useful for splinters and insect removal.

5. Navigation and Communication

Losing your way happens faster than most expect, especially in changing conditions.

- Map and Compass – GPS devices fail. Batteries deplete. Learn traditional navigation.
- Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) or Satellite Messenger – Essential for distress signaling.
- Whistle and Signal Mirror – Sound carries farther than a voice, and a mirror can attract rescuers from the air.

6. Multi-Tool and Repair Gear

- A reliable multi-tool provides solutions for a range of problems.
- Knife or Multi-Tool – For cutting, repairs, and kindling preparation.
- Duct Tape and Paracord – Versatile for emergency repairs, shelter construction, or medical use.

7. Light and Power

Darkness compounds risk in survival situations.

- Headlamp with Extra Batteries – Hands-free lighting is crucial.
- Solar Charger or Power Bank – Ensures critical devices remain powered.

Gear is essential, but knowing how to use it is even more important. Practice shelter setup, water filtration, and navigation before relying on them in an emergency. Survival is not about luck—it's about preparation. So next time you venture off-grid, pack smart. Adventure is about pushing boundaries, but survival is about respecting them.



GME MT610G PLB WITH GPS - NZ CODED

The all-new GME MT610G PLB with GPS offers a massive 7-year battery life to keep you safe and connected in the great outdoors. Made in Australia, this super-compact, lightweight PLB is designed to meet and exceed the latest international standards and is Cospas-Sarsat Class 2 certified.

Featuring an impressive 72 channel GPS receiver, a Non-Hazmat' battery pack for ease of transport, zero warm-up time, high-intensity LEDs, IP68 Ingress Protection, and an inherently buoyant design, the MT610G boasts a convenient compact size without compromising the included safety features. **RRP: \$499.00**



OCEAN SIGNAL RESCUEME PLB1

When activated the rescueME PLB1 transmits your position and your ID to a Rescue Coordination Center via satellite link. Rescue services nearest to you are promptly notified of your emergency and regularly advised of your current location to assist prompt rescue. The rescueME PLB1 is provided with a flotation pouch to fit the PLB1 into to enable it to float.

RRP: \$599.99
www.lusty-blundell.co.nz



ACR RESQLINK 400 PERSONAL LOCATOR BEACON

Equipped with three levels of signal technology – GPS positioning, a powerful 406 MHz signal, and 121.5 MHz homing capability – the ResQLink 410 RLS quickly relays your position to a worldwide network of search and rescue satellites. Night or low-visibility rescues are enhanced with built-in strobe and infrared lights.

RRP: \$519.00

" In 2023-2024 over 600 rescues where implemented by Land Search and Rescue. Even with the best preparation, the outdoors presents unpredictable challenges."



MCMURDO FAST FIND 220

The Fast Find 220 is a lightweight, palm sized unit designed for those of you who travel to out of the way places to give you peace of mind if you find yourself in an emergency situation with no other form of communication. On activation it will transmit your unique ID and precise GPS location on the 460MHz frequency to Search and Rescue satellites, alerting rescuers in minutes and giving them regular updates on your position. The unit also transmits on 121.5MHz frequency so you can be pinpointed by rescuers.

RRP: \$599.00
www.bivouac.co.nz



GARMIN INREACH MINI 2 GPS

Global satellite coverage keeps you connected. In an emergency, send an interactive SOS message to our coordination centre. You can still connect to the ones who matter, even without mobile phone coverage. With TracBack® routing, find your way back if you happen to get lost.

Expand the capabilities of your inReach device by using the Garmin Explore™ app. Stay on adventures longer with up to 14 days of battery life in 10-minute tracking mode.

RRP: \$829.00 (or \$770.00 from the Gearshop) www.gearshop.co.nz

SURVIVAL GEAR GUIDE



RAB EMERGENCY GROUP SHELTER 2 RRP: \$139.95
Made with lightweight and windproof polyester fabric, this emergency shelter is suitable for 1-2 people and includes waterproof seats and weather-resistant ventilation windows.
WWW.OUTFITTERS.CO.NZ



BLACK DIAMOND MEGA SNOW 4P TENT RRP \$899.99
The Mega Snow is an all-purpose basecamp shelter; featuring a perimeter snow valence to seal the edges from blowing snow, while increasing usable internal space. A unique venting system allows cooking vapor to escape without opening the door.
• Four-person capacity with single zippered opening
• 30d polyester fabric does not sag in wet conditions
• Fully taped seams
• Carbon fiber center pole included
• Perimeter nylon snow valence
• Pole Link Converter™ for ski/trekking pole set-up
• Rugged guy lines for building snow anchors
WWW.SOUTHERNAPPROACH.CO.NZ



FAST FIND 220 RRP \$599.00
The Fast Find 220 is a lightweight, palm sized unit designed for those of you who travel to out of the way places to give you peace of mind if you find yourself in an emergency situation with no other form of communication.
WWW.BIVOUAC.CO.NZ



RAB SILTARP 1 RRP: \$229.95

Strong, seam free, ultralight, and waterproof, the Siltarp offers a great shelter and a variety of setup options with a central lifter point.

WWW.OUTFITTERS.CO.NZ



LIFESTRAW PEAK SERIES STRAW RRP \$49.99

Drink directly from lakes, rivers, and streams or fill a container to use your straw water filter on the go with protection against bacteria, parasites, microplastics, silt, sand, and cloudiness.

This ultra-lightweight personal water filter straw is made from high-performance premium sustainable materials and boasts an enhanced flow rate for easy sipping. At 65g and up to 4000L of safe water, no backpack, pocket, emergency bag, or glove compartment should be without one.

WWW.SOUTHERNAPPROACH.CO.NZ



KEA KIT | OUTDOOR SURVIVAL SYSTEM

The First Aid & Survival System built for every adventure. Modular Organisation & Tough Materials mean you will always be ready to respond. Available in 2 sizes, you can choose to build your kit with our range of gear or just pack your own.

WWW.KEAOUTDOORS.COM



KEA AWA | WATER FILTRATION SYSTEM

Drink Safely Anywhere, Anytime. The AWA Straw offers best in class filtration and high flow rate making drink a breeze. Pair with the AWA Bottle to easily drink safely on the go.

WWW.KEAOUTDOORS.COM



RAB TRAILHEAD BIVI RRP: \$269.95

Lightweight and waterproof, this bivi offers great protection from the elements with a MVTR rating of 10,000 g/m²/24h. To use alone or under a tarp.

WWW.OUTFITTERS.CO.NZ



THAT'S IT HIKERS BUNDLE RRP: \$58.95

Save with our Hikers Bundle, perfect for your next mission on the trails! The That's It Hikers Bundle features our Anti Chafe Gel, Blister Stop Wool and First Aid Gel. Using our High Grade NZ Mānuka Oil, our products will help protect you from those chafing niggles, nasty blisters and help repair cuts, scrapes and grazes. Exclusively available online with free shipping in NZ.

Shop online at WWW.THATSI.IT.NZ



THAT'S IT HOT RUB RRP: \$34.50

Introducing That's It Hot Rub made with NZ Kānuka oil & Capsaicin – your ultimate companion for pre- and post-exercise care. This innovative product combines the natural power of Kānuka oil and capsaicin to heat your muscles, stimulate the blood flow and aid in your recovery. Experience the perfect synergy of nature and science with That's It Kānuka & Capsaicin Hot Rub

Shop online at WWW.THATSI.IT.NZ



RAB ARK EMERGENCY BIVI RRP: \$19.95

Made with lightweight PE, the ARK Emergency Bivi is wind and waterproof and reflects body heat to keep you safe in emergency situations.

WWW.OUTFITTERS.CO.NZ



BLACK DIAMOND STORM 500-R RRP \$139.99

Perfect for a technical consumer who expects all-around performance and features out of their headlamp but still values a small size and compact package. This user has access to a power source and values the ability to go out on their mission with a fully charged battery.

- Rechargeable: Powered with integrated high capacity 2400 mAh Li-ion battery with micro-USB charge port
- 500 Lumen max output
- Recycled elastic headband
- IP67: Waterproof-Tested to operate at least 1.0 meters underwater for 30 minutes.
- PowerTap™ Technology

WWW.SOUTHERNAPPROACH.CO.NZ



OUTDOOR RESEARCH HELIUM RAIN ULTRALIGHT JACKET RRP: \$299.99

Lightweight, waterproof, and ultra-packable flash storm protection for peace of mind when traveling in unpredictable weather conditions. Pertex® Shield fabric. Adjustable hood, YKK® Aquaguard® zippers, elastic cuffs, zip hand pockets and carabiner loop with key clip to keep essentials secure.

WWW.BIVOUAC.CO.NZ

EXPED ULTRA PILLOW (MEDIUM) RRP: \$69.99

Anatomically shaped, ultra-light and ultra-compact, ideal for adventures where weight, packed size and comfort are important. Made with recycled and super comfortable stretch fabric and has an inflate/deflate FlatValve for a comfortable sleep. Eyelets on the side allow attachment to your mat.

WWW.BIVOUAC.CO.NZ



YETI PANGA®28L WATERPROOF BACKPACK RRP: \$450.00

Built for those who live their lives on the water. Keeps your gear dry, whether in a storm or on a lake.

WWW.NZ.YETI.COM



EXPED MEGA PILLOW RRP: \$99.99

Large air pillow with a velvety soft tricot nylon cover padded with synthetic insulation ideal for those who like the luxury of a large pillow. The inflate/deflate FlatValve makes it easy to adjust the height of the pillow and the eyelets on the side allows it to be attached to a mat. The cover can be machine washed.

WWW.BIVOUAC.CO.NZ



EXPED SKYLINE 45 PACK

RRP: \$399.99

Ergonomic Air Flow back system with close-to-body fit for all-day comfort. Adjustable back length, padded hip belt, internal frame. Roll-top closure with removeable top lid that can double as a waist pack. Side zip for quick access. Can fit a hydration reservoir and comes with an integrated rain cover.

WWW.BIVOUAC.CO.NZ



YETI ROADIE®15 HARD COOLER RRP: \$350.00

MEET THE MOST COMPACT HARD COOLER IN OUR LINEUP. This small but mighty version of the classic Roadie® Family still packs all your favourite essentials, cans, and wine bottles, but in our most portable design yet. It's the perfect fit for any ATV, paddle, board, or kayak, and easy enough to carry down to the beach or fishing spot.

WWW.NZ.YETI.COM

BLACK DIAMOND DEPLOY GLOVE RRP \$79.99

The Deploy is a lightweight, breathable base-layer glove with a slim fit that's designed for running and hiking. Made with soft, wicking fabric and a grid fleece nosewipe on the back of thumb.

- Touchscreen compatible thumb and index finger
- Wristwatch opening
- Mapped silicone palm for grip and durability
- Reflective logo treatments for increased visibility
- Pairing clip

WWW.SOUTHERNAPPROACH.CO.NZ



BLACK DIAMOND HYBRID LIGHT GLOVE RRP \$99.99

A midweight glove for moderate cool-weather activities, the Hybrid Light is a 3-layer stretch softshell glove with a thermal fleece palm for enhanced breathability.

- 3-layer softshell outer layer is wind and waterproof
- Touch screen compatible thumb and index finger
- Wristwatch opening
- Soft grid fleece nosewipe
- Mapped silicone palm for grip and durability
- Reflective logo treatments for increased visibility
- Pairing Clip

WWW.SOUTHERNAPPROACH.CO.NZ



SOURCE CONVERTUBE + SAWYER WATER FILTER KIT
*RRP: \$159.95

Transform bottles into hydration systems with the Convertube + Sawyer Filter Kit. Filters 378,500 litres, removing 99.99999% bacteria and 99.9999% protozoa—ideal for outdoor adventures.



FIRE DRAGON SOLID FUEL (6 PACK)

*RRP: \$9.95

FireDragon Solid Fuel is an eco-friendly, waterproof, and odorless fuel, perfect for cooking and fire-starting in any weather. Non-toxic, fast-burning, and easy to light.



FLIPFUEL® FUEL TRANSFER DEVICE

*RRP: \$69.95

The FlipFuel® Fuel Transfer Device lets you easily transfer fuel between canisters, reducing waste and saving weight. Compact, lightweight, and perfect for outdoor adventures.



SOURCE HYDRATION TUBE + SAWYER WATER FILTER KIT

*RRP: \$139.95

The Source Hydration Tube Sawyer Filter Kit provides clean, safe drinking water on the go by integrating a Sawyer filter into your hydration system for effortless filtration.



XTORM PRETTY RUGGED 20

*RRP: \$199.95

Xtorm Xtreme Rugged Power Bank 20,000mAh

The Rugged Power Bank 20,000mAh is a durable, high-capacity charger with fast USB-C output, solar charging, and waterproof design—perfect for outdoor adventures.



OCEAN SIGNAL RESCUEME PLB1

*RRP: \$599.00

The Ocean Signal RescueME PLB1 is a compact, waterproof personal locator beacon with GPS, ensuring fast emergency response wherever your adventure takes you.



TERRA NOVA SURVIVAL BIVY

*RRP: \$279.00

The Terra Nova Survival Bivi is a lightweight, waterproof, and breathable emergency shelter, offering essential protection for outdoor adventures and unexpected overnight stays.



TERRA NOVA BOTHY 4 SHELTER

*RRP: \$179.00

The Terra Nova Bothy 4 is a lightweight, compact emergency shelter for up to four people. Windproof, waterproof, and essential for group safety in harsh conditions.



MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT HELIUM 400 SLEEPING BAG

*RRP: \$649.00

Mountain Equipment Helium 400 Sleeping Bag (-5°C/23°F)

The Mountain Equipment Helium 400 is a lightweight, packable down sleeping bag, offering warmth, comfort, and performance for backpacking and alpine adventures.



*prices are subject to change

Find the full product range online at www.outdooraction.co.nz
Follow us on Instagram and Facebook @outdooractionnz



MERRELL MAIPO EXPLORER SIEVE WOMEN'S RRP: \$239.00

This performance hike sandal lets water escape quickly for protection and traction when you need it most.

WWW.MERRELL.CO.NZ



MERRELL SPEEDARC MATIS GORE-TEX MEN'S RRP: \$399.00

Powered by the revolutionary SpeedARC™ midsole system, this sleek powerhouse pairs dual FloatPro™ foam cushioning with advanced nylon FlexPlate™ technology to deliver unrivaled energy return and superior support. Every step feels smooth, effortless, and unstoppable, whether you're climbing rugged trails or strolling city streets.

WWW.MERRELL.CO.NZ



MERRELL MOAB SPEED 2 MEN'S RRP: \$329.00

The Moab Speed 2 is the latest innovation in hiking from the Merrell brand pairing the knowledge and trail insights from the best-selling hiking boot, the Merrell Moab, with the latest innovations from athletic hikers across the globe.

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MERRELL MOAB SPEED 2 LEATHER WATERPROOF WOMEN'S RRP: \$369.00

The Moab Speed 2 Leather Waterproof is designed with premium, nubuck leather & utilizes mixed materials for a stylized and modern approach to a leather hiking shoe for the fall season.

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MERRELL MOAB 3 MID WATERPROOF MEN'S HIKING BOOTS RRP: \$329.00

The all new Moab 3 features a new more supportive insole, a softer more cushioned midsole, and a best-in-class Vibram® outsole. Our newest generation is the most environmentally friendly Moab ever, utilizing recycled materials in construction.

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SALEWA ALP TRAINER 2 MID GORE-TEX® RRP: \$479.90

The Alp Trainer 2 Mid GTX has a suede leather and stretch fabric upper with a protective rubber rand. Featuring a GORE-TEX® Extended Comfort lining for optimal waterproofing and breathability, and the customizable Multi Fit Footbed (MFF) with interchangeable layers allows you to adapt it to the unique shape of your foot. Climbing Lacing right to the toe allows for a more precise fit, while the Vibram® Hike Approach outsole performs across a wide spectrum of mountain terrain.

Fit: STANDARD / Weight (M) 552 g (W) 482 g (pictured)

WWW.BOBO.CO.NZ/SALEWA



SALEWA WILDFIRE NXT GTX RRP: \$419.90

Hiking comfort meets climbing precision – the Wildfire NXT Gore-Tex® is a high-performance, door-to-summit, lightweight and durable approach shoe with a seamless Kevlar®-reinforced Matryx® upper, and an oversized cushioning midsole. Its unique Vibram® All-Terrain™ Megagrip outsole provides secure grip and traction in all conditions, while our trademark 3F System holds the ankle and wraps the sides of your foot to guarantee a true fit with good support, and agility.

Fit: STANDARD / Weight: (M) 360 g (W) 305 g (pictured)

WWW.BOBO.CO.NZ/SALEWA



SALEWA WILDFIRE NXT RRP: \$359.90

Designed to go from door to summit, the Wildfire NXT is our most advanced approach shoe. It features a seamless Kevlar®-reinforced Matryx® fabric upper that combines hiking comfort with climbing performance. Featuring our updated 3F System on the heel and lateral areas, this shoe wraps the ankle and outer edge of the foot to promote agility, while its TPU rand protects you from rocks and scree. Underfoot, its fast-moving Vibram® All-Terrain™ Megagrip® outsole design provides climbing precision and secure grip on any terrain, in both wet and dry conditions.

Fit: STANDARD / Weight: (M) 345 g (pictured) (W) 295 g

WWW.BOBO.CO.NZ/SALEWA

SALEWA PEDROC POWERTEX RRP: \$459.90

Designed for moving fast in the mountains. This lightweight, versatile, yet protective technical trail shoe has an eco-friendly PFC-free PowerTex® membrane for waterproof protection, and good breathability. The strong ripstop mesh upper and TPU rand offer high abrasion resistance. The EVA midsole delivers optimal rebound, and the Pomoca™ Speed Hiker Pro outsole works well on mud, grass and rock.

Fit: STANDARD / Weight: (M) 345 g (W) 260 g (pictured)

WWW.BOBO.CO.NZ/SALEWA



SALEWA ORTLES LIGHT MID POWERTEX RRP: \$659.90

This lightweight, comfortable mid-cut boot is both technical and agile. The Ankle Protector System wraps the foot, providing stability and protection from rock and scree. The Edging Plate technology blends targeted stiffness for edging stability and enhanced climbing performance with balanced flex and rebound for hiking comfort. The tough nylon fabric is reinforced with high-tenacity, abrasion-resistant, protective TPU stitching and film. It features our PFC-free waterproof and breathable PowerTex® membrane, and the built-in gaiter helps to keep out trail debris. The Pomoca Alpine Light outsole ensures increased grip and traction in varied terrain.

Fit: STANDARD / Weight: (M) 575 g (pictured) (W) 425 g

WWW.BOBO.CO.NZ/SALEWA



SALEWA RAPACE GORE-TEX® RRP: \$649.90

The Rapace GTX is a lightweight mountaineering boot with a hard-wearing nubuck upper with waterproof breathable GORE-TEX® protection. The 3F System provides ankle support, flexibility and a perfect fit. Our Bilight TPU technology and Nylon + 27% Fiberglass in the midsole ensures an ergonomic hold and allows the use of semi-automatic crampons. There's a full rubber rand, and the Vibram WTC outsole has an aggressive tread pattern that gives good traction.

Fit: WIDE / Weight: (M) 740 g (pictured) (W) 615

WWW.BOBO.CO.NZ/SALEWA

FEED YOUR ADDICTION

Like a 'perfect storm', we have seen a dramatic growth and development in online stores over the past 5 years.

We are dedicating these pages to our client's online stores; some you will be able to buy from, some you will be able drool over. Buy, compare, research and prepare, these online stores are a great way to feed your adventure addiction.



The best outdoor equipment for all of your adventurous antics. Outdoor Action has you sorted.

www.outdooraction.co.nz



Shop men's, women's, and kids' boots, shoes, and clothing at Timberland NZ official online store.

www.timberland.co.nz



The place to go for all the gear you need whether you're skiing, snowboarding, hiking, biking or just exploring.

www.thealpinecentre.co.nz



KIWI ULTRALIGHT

Kiwi Ultralight is a family-owned, New Zealand-based ultralight tramping gear manufacturer and supplier who aim to inform and improve the tramping experience of ultralight hikers of the world.

www.kiwiultralight.co.nz



Stocking an extensive range of global outdoor adventure brands for your next big adventure. See them for travel, tramping, trekking, alpine and lifestyle clothing and gear.

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Bobo Products, a leading importer and distributor of snow and outdoor products in New Zealand.

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Our ultra-durable coolers, drinkware and bags are the pinnacle of performance and built for your next adventure.

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Amazing holidays for active people and those who seek 'travel less ordinary'. www.wildsidetravel.co.nz

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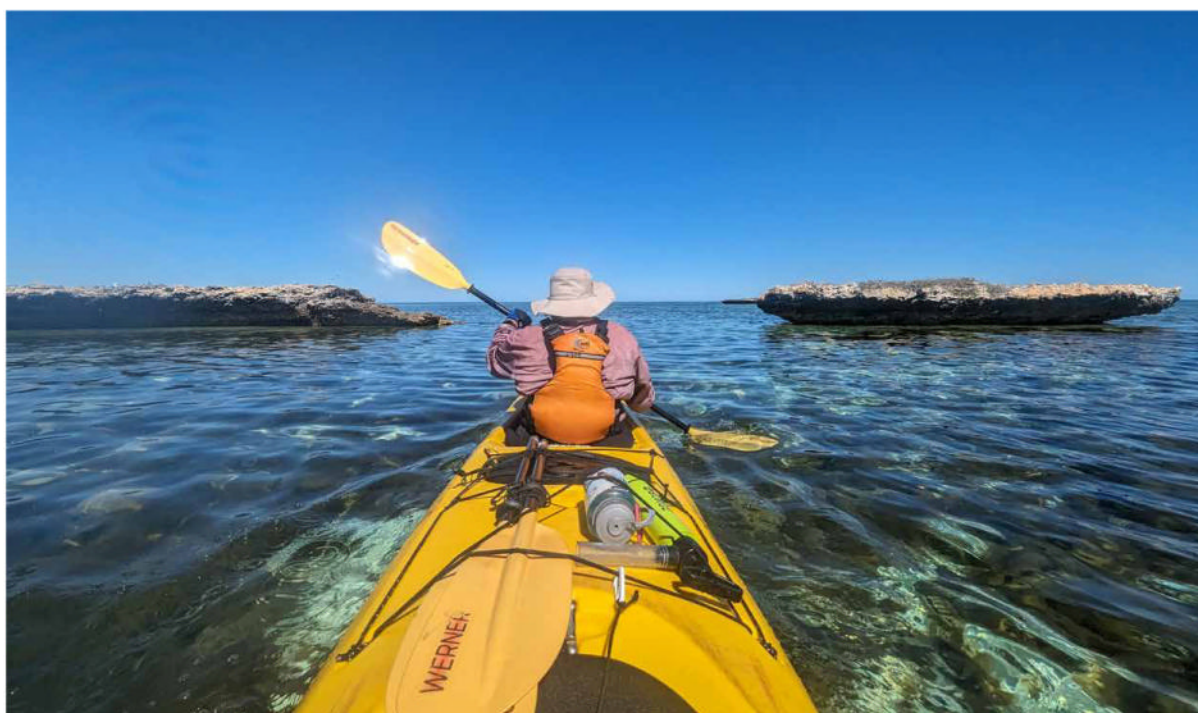
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Abrolhos Islands



PADDLING INTO PARADISE:

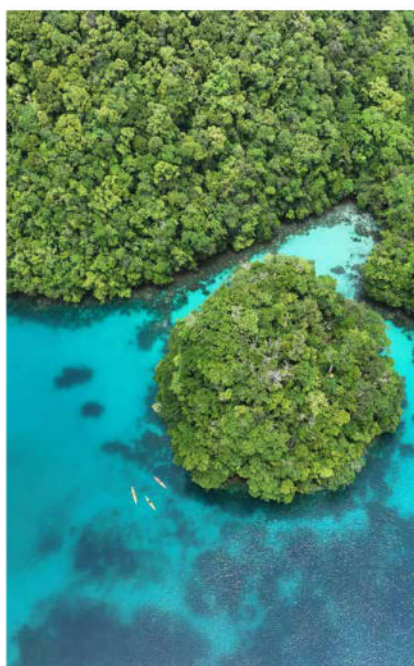
THE MAGIC OF SSV LIVEABOARD KAYAKING ADVENTURES

There's a unique rhythm to life on the water, where the rising sun pulls you from your cabin, the morning mist kisses the ocean, and the promise of adventure lies just beyond the horizon. SSV, a pioneer in liveaboard kayaking expeditions, has transformed this rhythm into an unforgettable experience for adventurers seeking to explore the world's most stunning coastal regions.

SSV currently offers five liveaboard experiences, from the majestic fjords of Greenland to the vibrant reefs of Sulawesi. These once in a lifetime journeys seamlessly blend kayaking, exploration, and cultural immersion. Here, we dive into the magic of these multi-day adventures, sharing a glimpse of the destinations, the people, and the stories that make them extraordinary.

Book your liveaboard and kayaking adventure today www.southernseaventures.com

Palau



Palau: A Marine Wonderland

In the heart of Micronesia, Palau's UNESCO World Heritage-listed Rock Islands offer some of the clearest waters and vibrant ecosystems on Earth. The Palau Siren, a luxurious 40-meter liveaboard handcrafted from ironwood and teak, serves as the perfect base for exploring this marine wonderland. Kayakers navigate through intricate waterways, paddle over teeming coral reefs, and venture into hidden caves and blue holes.

"Palau is a paddler's dream," shares one SSV guide. "Each day, we glide past mushroom-shaped islands, explore marine lakes, and snorkel in lagoons alive with 1,500 species of fish and 700 types of coral."

The journey also includes diving opportunities to witness WWII wrecks and breathtaking underwater canyons. After a day of adventure, guests return to the Palau Siren's spacious decks, enjoying fresh meals and the camaraderie of fellow explorers.

Abrolhos Islands: Australia's Hidden Gem

Off the coast of Western Australia lies the Abrolhos Islands, often referred to as the 'Galapagos of the Indian Ocean.' This archipelago of 122 islands is renowned for its rich marine biodiversity and historical shipwrecks, including the infamous Batavia. The Silverado, a 24-meter deluxe catamaran, serves as the floating base for this adventure.

Each day brings a mix of kayaking, snorkelling, and historical exploration. Paddlers glide through turquoise waters, past limestone reefs teeming with fish, rays, and the endangered Australian sea lion. Visits to sites like Beacon Island reveal remnants of the Batavia's dramatic history, while snorkelling over coral gardens offers a mesmerizing underwater spectacle.

"The flexibility of the Silverado allows us to chase the best conditions," explains a guide. "One day we're snorkelling with sea lions; the next, we're paddling along secluded beaches where seabirds nest in the millions."



Solomon Islands: A Blend of Adventure and Culture

The Solomon Islands' vibrant reefs and storied past make for an unforgettable 11-day liveaboard journey aboard the Solomons Master. Paddlers explore a labyrinth of coral atolls, WWII wrecks, and pristine lagoons. Villages like those in Marovo Lagoon offer unique cultural encounters, with local carvers and markets providing a glimpse into island life.

"There's something magical about paddling alongside locals in dugout canoes," reflects an SSV guide. "It's a connection to the past and present all at once."

Highlights include kayaking through the Russell Islands' lush landscapes, diving on vibrant reefs teeming with marine life, and snorkelling at sites like Mary Island, where coral gardens and schooling fish create an underwater paradise.

"SSV, a pioneer in liveaboard kayaking expeditions, has transformed this rhythm into an unforgettable experience for adventurers seeking to explore the world's most stunning coastal regions."



West Greenland: A Polar Adventure

The rugged beauty of West Greenland's Disko Bay awaits intrepid paddlers aboard the Elsi, a nimble 16-person schooner. This 9-day expedition blends kayaking, hiking, and cruising through some of the Arctic's most pristine and awe-inspiring landscapes.

"Greenland is the cradle of kayaking," shares an SSV guide. "Paddling alongside towering icebergs and venturing into fjords surrounded by steep basalt cliffs is an otherworldly experience." Highlights include exploring the volcanic landscapes of Disko Island, hiking to breathtaking waterfalls, and paddling through the Uummannaq Fjord, with its heart-shaped mountain backdrop. Encounters with Arctic wildlife like reindeer, musk ox, and humpback whales add to the trip's magic.

Back on the Elsi, travelers enjoy warm meals, cozy cabins, and the endless light of the polar summer.





"These trips are about maximizing adventure in the wildest parts of the world while ensuring the comfort of your own room wherever you go."



Sulawesi: A Tropical Masterpiece

Sulawesi, Indonesia, offers a liveaboard adventure unlike any other. Aboard the elegant Jakaré, paddlers explore this archipelago's dramatic landscapes, from karst cliffs to mangrove-fringed lagoons. Sulawesi's waters are alive with marine biodiversity, making it a snorkeler's and diver's paradise.

"Sulawesi combines cultural richness with natural beauty," says SSV owner Toby Story. "Kayaking here means discovering secret coves and encountering vibrant local traditions."

Paddling routes include visits to remote fishing villages, snorkelling over coral reefs, and trekking to hidden waterfalls. Back aboard the Jakaré, guests can unwind with meals featuring fresh, local ingredients while sharing stories of the day's adventures.

The Liveaboard Difference

What sets SSV's liveaboard adventures apart is the blend of comfort and exploration. The liveaboard vessels serve as both transport and home base, allowing adventurers to access remote locations while enjoying amenities like air-conditioned cabins, freshly prepared meals, and knowledgeable guides.

"These trips are about maximizing adventure in the wildest parts of the world while ensuring the comfort of your own room wherever you go," explains an SSV guide.

This flexibility also allows for deeper exploration. If weather shifts or tides change, the crew can adapt, ensuring every day brings new discoveries.

A Legacy of Adventure

SSV's commitment to crafting transformative experiences is evident in every aspect of their liveaboard adventures. Whether you're paddling alongside towering cliffs, sharing laughter with fellow travellers, or simply floating in silence as the sun dips below the horizon, these trips are about more than the destinations. They're about connection—to nature, to others, and to yourself.

Toby Story, SSV's founder, reflects on the philosophy behind the company's expeditions: "Our goal has always been to create journeys that inspire people to reconnect with the natural world and find joy in its wonders."

So, what's it like to embark on an SSV liveaboard kayaking expedition? It's waking up to the sound of waves lapping against the hull. It's the thrill of spotting a sea turtle or manta ray just meters away. It's the laughter around a campfire and the stories shared under starlit skies. Most of all, it's the feeling of being fully alive, carried forward by the tides of adventure.

Where will your paddle take you next?

Paddle the world in comfort



There's a unique rhythm to life on the water, where the rising sun pulls you from your cabin, the morning mist kisses the ocean, and the promise of adventure lies just beyond the horizon. SSV, a pioneer in liveaboard kayaking expeditions, has transformed this rhythm into an unforgettable experience for adventurers seeking to explore the world's most stunning marine environments.



THE SOLOMON ISLANDS: AN UNTAMED PARADISE

Contributing words by Mike Parker-Brown

Tucked into the South Pacific, the Solomon Islands are an adventure waiting to happen. But not the kind that requires a death wish or a six-month training plan. This is adventure experience at its best—real, raw, and immersive, yet accessible to anyone with a pulse and a curiosity for the unknown.

Think of it as the antidote to overdeveloped tourist hotspots. No sprawling resorts. No themed attractions. Just the kind of travel where you trade the predictable for the authentic. From kayaking through mangrove mazes to diving in WWII wrecks, hiking volcanoes, or paddling between jungle-clad islands, the Solomons are about experience, not spectacle.

Untouched, Unrushed, Unforgettable

The Solomon Islands are one of the last frontiers of the Pacific. A chain of nearly 1,000 islands, only 147 are inhabited. That means vast stretches of pristine nature—empty beaches, untouched coral reefs, and rainforests that haven't been cut into submission. If you want to step off the grid but still have an adventure that doesn't require a survival manual, this is your place.

Forget five-star luxury; here, the five-star rating comes from the experience itself. The locals are warm, the landscapes wild, and the adventures as thrilling or as mellow as you want them to be.

Surfing in the Solomon Islands

While the Solomon Islands has a reputation for world class diving, from the months of November to April when the northern Pacific swells sweep in having done their dash with Hawaii, the destination's extensive reefs and north-western facing islands come alive with some of the most perfect – and best of all uncrowded – waves to be found anywhere on the planet. While the two best-known regions are currently Gizo in the

Western Province and Santa Isabel Province, and to a lesser extent, the Florida Islands and North Malaita – there are still literally dozens of secret spots throughout this archipelago of 992 islands, the locations of which are closely guarded by a handful of hard travelling board riders.

Perhaps the most easily reached region is Gizo with daily Solomon Airlines' Dash-8 and Twin Otter flights from Honiara to the Nusa Tupe airstrip. The area offers surfers a good choice of accommodation from village homestays to eco-lodges, hotels and resorts. The Hotel Gizo is also a popular hang for surfers.

As for the waves, a few minutes by boat from Gizo township is Palonggi, a long, shallow right that's well exposed to swell. It works best on bigger swells when the wave's sections join up and it can get hollow. Palonggi breaks in front of a village where a handful of friendly local surfers reside and have helped set up a beachside home stay.

But surfers beware of the reef; many an unwary surfer has come a cropper at Palonggi with many departing the country wearing what the locals laughingly call a 'Palonggi tattoo' aka nasty coral cuts.

An aerial photograph showing two surfers on white surfboards in clear, turquoise water. The surfer on the left is a man with long hair, wearing black shorts, and is in a crouched position. The surfer on the right is a woman with long hair, wearing a black bikini, and is also in a crouched position. Both surfers are wearing black fins. The water is very clear, showing the sandy bottom and some small rocks. The surfers are moving towards the bottom left of the frame.

For those who like to go left, nearby Titiana's is a goofy's paradise, again a long shallow ride which when showing a bit of size allows surfers to loop through section after section with an easy paddle back. Truth be told Gizo is not the best place for beginners – you need to know what you are doing.

While Gizo area offers some great breaks – and when the swell is running breaks pop up all over the area – a great place to visit, stay and surf is Zipolo Habu on remote Lola Island in the heart of the Vono Vono Lagoon. The name means 'good luck fishing'.

The best places for surfers to stay are the dedicated surfing camps, particularly in Santa Isabel, all of which package accommodation, boats, meals and most importantly of all, easy access to those all-important surf breaks.

And the jewel in the surfing crown is Papatura Island Retreat located on Papatura Island. Papatura Island Retreat is without doubt one of the best surfing set-ups to be found anywhere in the South Pacific. Managed by Australian expats Pete and Margie Blanche and their children, the resort sits on a beautiful sandy beach facing the main island of Santa Isabel, and is protected from the ocean winds.

On the seaward side of the island several good surf breaks, rights and lefts, lie just minutes away - Anchovies, PTs, Kummas, Zolis, Donuts and Tarzans, the latter offering a perfect a-frame with barrels going in both directions, a true surfer's dream.
www.visitsolomons.com.sb/things-to-do/surfing/



Mike Parker Brown dealing with the crowds - Image by Chris McLennan

"What you will find is an island nation that's as real as it gets – a place where nature still rules, where history isn't just something in museums, and where adventure is whatever you make it."

Kayaking Through Untamed Waters

If adventure should come with a paddle in hand, the Solomon Islands deliver. Kayaking here isn't about dodging crowds or following a pre-set route. It's about moving at your own pace, island-hopping between remote beaches, and pulling up to traditional villages where you're more likely to be met with curiosity than commerce.

The Marovo Lagoon—one of the largest saltwater lagoons in the world. Glide over glassy waters, past tiny atolls, and alongside coral reefs teeming with life. You can stop to snorkel in places where you won't see another soul or navigate the mangrove forests, where the silence is broken only by the dip of your paddle and the call of unseen birds.

www.visitsolomons.com.sb/things-to-do/adventure/

World-Class Diving Without the Crowds

If you're a diver, you've heard of places like the Great Barrier Reef and Palau. But the Solomon Islands? This is the diving destination that's still flying under the radar.

Crystal-clear waters, untouched reefs, and a solid mix of marine biodiversity make it a dream for soft adventure divers. But the real kicker? The wrecks.

During WWII, the Solomon Islands were a major battleground, and the seabed still holds the ghosts of that era. Sunken warships, fighter planes, and submarines lie scattered beneath the waves. You don't have to be a technical diver to experience it—plenty of wrecks sit at accessible depths, offering an eerie but fascinating glimpse into history.

For a dive site that blends both nature and history, Bonegi Beach is a winner. Just off the shore, two Japanese transport ships from WWII sit encrusted with coral and patrolled by reef sharks. It's a surreal mix of war relics and marine life, making it one of the most unique underwater experiences in the Pacific.

www.visitsolomons.com.sb/things-to-do/scuba-diving/

Hiking with a View (and a Story)

Adventure doesn't have to be soft on the legs. The Solomon Islands have jungle-clad mountains, dormant volcanoes, and rainforest trails where every step feels like a journey back in time.

Kolombangara Volcano is one of the best hikes in the country. It's an extinct volcano with a near-perfect cone, wrapped in dense rainforest. The hike itself takes a couple of days if you want to summit, but there are shorter routes that still deliver a good dose of adventure. The payoff? Views over the islands that are as untouched as they come.

Or for something with a bit more history, trek the Guadalcanal battlefields. This is where some of the fiercest fighting of WWII took place, and remnants of that era still sit scattered through the jungle. Walking these trails isn't just about the scenery—it's about stepping through history in a way that feels real, not just something out of a textbook.

www.visitsolomons.com.sb/things-to-do/trekking/



Fishing Where the Big Fish Still Exist

If you're the kind of adventurer who prefers a rod to a hiking pole, the Solomon Islands serve up some of the best sportfishing in the Pacific. And here's the best part—you don't have to head 50 miles offshore to find action. Giant trevally, dogtooth tuna, wahoo, and sailfish are all on the menu.

The waters here are rich, and the pressure from commercial fishing is minimal, meaning big fish still roam in numbers that are disappearing elsewhere. Whether you're popping for GTs or trolling for yellowfin tuna, the Solomons give you the kind of fishing that people used to talk about in the "good old days."

www.visitsolomons.com.sb/things-to-do/fishing/

Culture You Can't Fake

Adventure isn't just about the landscapes; it's about the people. The Solomon Islands aren't just another island chain, they're a cultural experience that's still very much alive.

Here, traditions run deep. Villages operate much the way they have for centuries, and tourism hasn't bulldozed the authenticity out of daily life. If you want an experience that feels real, spend some time in a local village. Watch woodcarvers create intricate masterpieces, learn the art of spearfishing from islanders who've been doing it since childhood, or sit around a fire and hear stories that aren't in any guidebook.

www.visitsolomons.com.sb/things-to-do/culture/

The Solomon Islands aren't the easy choice. They're not for people looking for an all-inclusive buffet and a crowded beach. But that's exactly why they're worth it.

Here, adventure still feels like adventure. You won't have to battle hordes of tourists for a slice of paradise. You won't find pre-packaged "experiences" designed for mass consumption. What you will find is an island nation that's as real as it gets—a place where nature still rules, where history isn't just something in museums, and where adventure is whatever you make it.

So, if soft adventure means more to you than just a marketing term—if it means discovery, experience, and getting away from the predictable—the Solomon Islands should be on your radar. Because this is adventure, untouched.

*Previous Page: Culture and adventure go hand in hand
Photo by Chris McLennan*

*Top: Leru Cut in the Russell Islands.
Photo by Matt Smith*

Insert: Authentic culture at every turn

Solomon Is. Surfing



UNCROWDED WAVES

visitsolomons.com.sb



HIDDEN GEM: FIJI'S BEST-KEPT FISHING SECRET

Picture this: the deep blue expanse of the Pacific stretching endlessly before you, the sun climbing above the horizon, and a reel screaming as a monster Yellowfin Tuna makes a break for it. This is the thrill that awaits with Hidden Gem Boats, one of Fiji's premier sportfishing charter operators. With two top-tier vessels—Momo Gem II and Looney Tunes—Hidden Gem offers everything from half-day reef fishing excursions to week-long explorations of the region's most pristine and untouched fishing grounds. Their home base? Port Denarau Marina, just outside Nadi and a quick hop from the international airport, making access to this angling paradise as easy as stepping off the plane.

The Fishing: Big, Bold, and Unforgettable

Whether you're an experienced angler chasing the fight of a lifetime or a first-timer looking to reel in a bucket-list catch, Hidden Gem delivers. Their lineup of fishing experiences is as diverse as Fiji's marine life:

- Heavy tackle game fishing for the ocean's apex predators—Billfish, Yellowfin Tuna, Mahi Mahi, and Dogtooth Tuna.
- Light tackle and topwater action targeting Spanish Mackerel, Giant Trevally (GT), Red Bass, and Longnosed Emperor.
- Offshore fly fishing for speedsters like Wahoo and Sailfish, an adrenaline-pumping test of skill and precision.

And that's just the start. With so many options, Hidden Gem ensures every guest has a shot at their own record-breaking moment.





The Seasons: Timing Your Trophy Catch

Fiji's waters are productive year-round, but different seasons bring different opportunities. The cooler, drier months from May to September are prime for Wahoo, Spanish Mackerel, and Sailfish, while the warmer season from October to April sees runs of Yellowfin Tuna and hefty Blue Marlin. If you're after powerhouses like GTs and Dogtooth Tuna, then tide movements and moon phases are key factors—something the expert crew at Hidden Gem knows how to time to perfection.

Hidden Gem isn't just about fishing—it's about creating one-of-a-kind experiences. Whether it's an afternoon reef session or a week-long expedition to remote, untouched fishing grounds, every trip is tailored to provide the ultimate adventure.

Now, the team is pushing boundaries even further. They're pioneering expeditions into some of Fiji's most isolated waters, working closely with local communities to ensure these fisheries remain unspoiled by overfishing and unchecked tourism. These new trips will take anglers beyond the typical hotspots and into the true heart of Fijian life—places where fishing isn't just a sport but a way of survival.

While exact locations are kept under wraps to protect these pristine areas, Hidden Gem is focusing on the Northern Lau Group, the northeastern edges of Vanua Levu, and some ultra-remote atolls that few outsiders ever see. It's a rare opportunity to not just fish in paradise, but to experience a slice of Fiji far removed from the luxury resorts and tourist trails.

The Hidden Gem Difference

At Hidden Gem, it's not just about the fish—it's about the adventure, the experience, and the respect for the ocean that provides it all. Their commitment to top-quality service, sustainable fishing, and unmatched local knowledge makes them more than just a charter—they're the ultimate gateway to Fiji's legendary waters. So, whether you're chasing a trophy fish, exploring uncharted islands, or just looking for an unforgettable escape, one thing is certain: with Hidden Gem, you'll leave with a story worth telling.

Forget the path less travelled, we help take you to the spots less fished.
Fish the Mamanuca Islands, Yasawa Islands and greater Viti Levu waters with expert anglers.



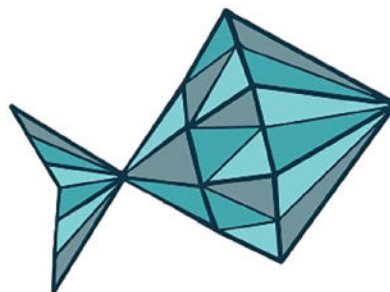
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*Designed for speed & maneuverability,
perfect for open water.*



Looney Tunes

*Our 36-foot Blackwatch Flybridge is a
sleek and powerful vessel designed for a
serious offshore fishing adventure.*



Hidden Gem

DIVING & FISHING FIJI

Bula and welcome to Fiji. We are here to help you create the ideal fishing trip for you, your friends or your family.

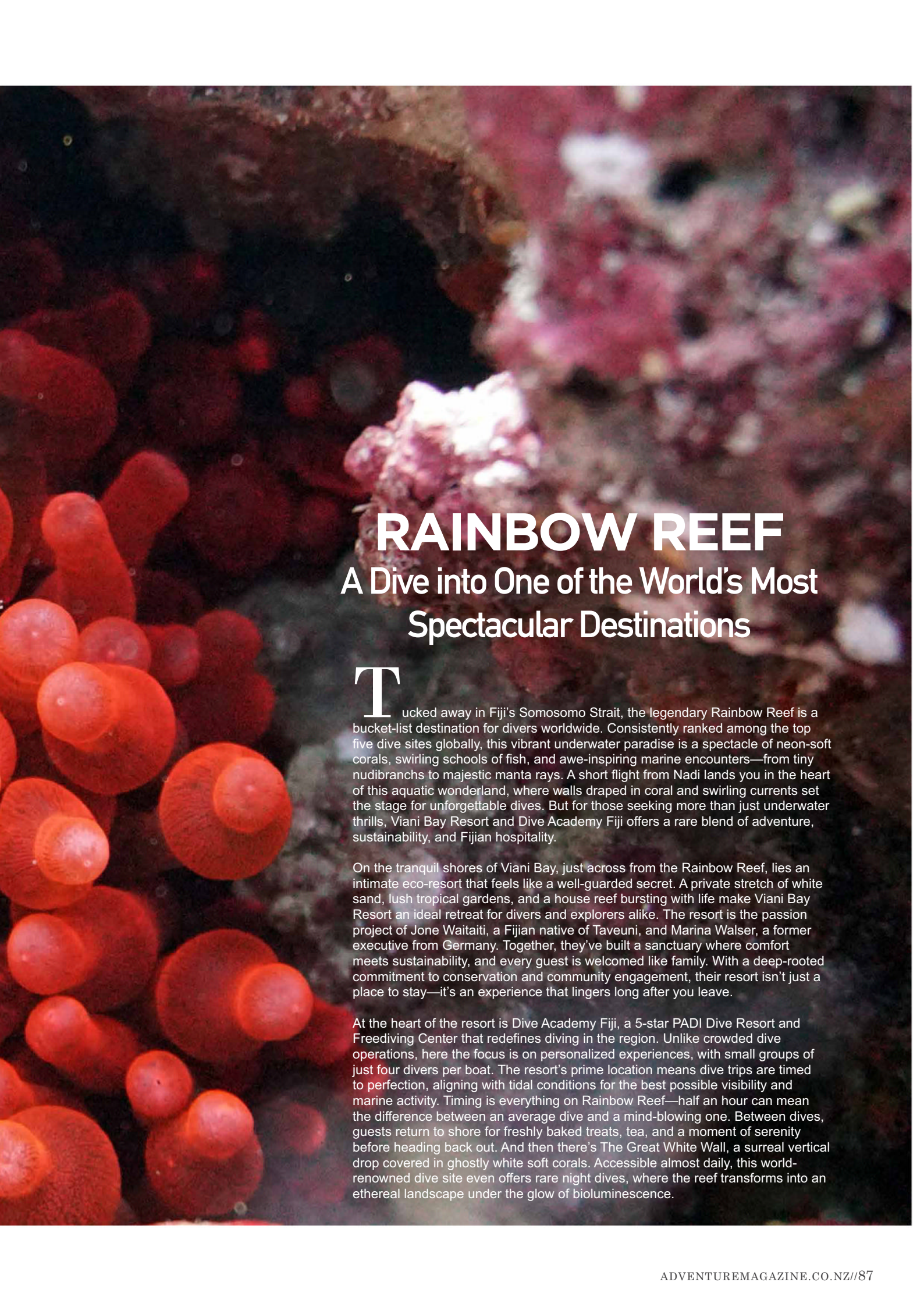
With over 15 years of experience fishing Fiji's waters, we know the hidden spots to help you land that catch.

To us, fishing isn't just a sport, it's our passion, and we work hard to create sustainable fishing experiences on every single trip.

If you are looking for a tailor-made fishing experience, then talk to us.

www.hiddengemfiji.com





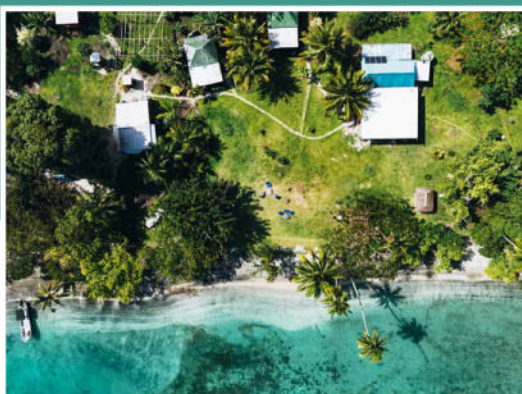
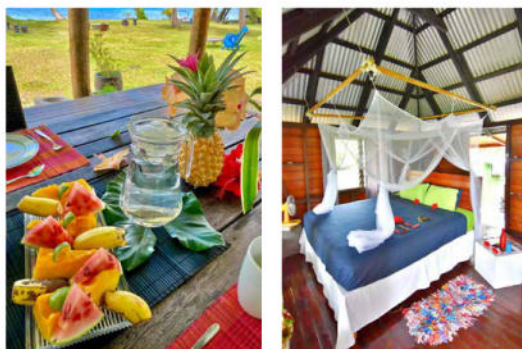
RAINBOW REEF

A Dive into One of the World's Most Spectacular Destinations

Tucked away in Fiji's Somosomo Strait, the legendary Rainbow Reef is a bucket-list destination for divers worldwide. Consistently ranked among the top five dive sites globally, this vibrant underwater paradise is a spectacle of neon-soft corals, swirling schools of fish, and awe-inspiring marine encounters—from tiny nudibrachs to majestic manta rays. A short flight from Nadi lands you in the heart of this aquatic wonderland, where walls draped in coral and swirling currents set the stage for unforgettable dives. But for those seeking more than just underwater thrills, Viani Bay Resort and Dive Academy Fiji offers a rare blend of adventure, sustainability, and Fijian hospitality.

On the tranquil shores of Viani Bay, just across from the Rainbow Reef, lies an intimate eco-resort that feels like a well-guarded secret. A private stretch of white sand, lush tropical gardens, and a house reef bursting with life make Viani Bay Resort an ideal retreat for divers and explorers alike. The resort is the passion project of Jone Waitaiti, a Fijian native of Taveuni, and Marina Walser, a former executive from Germany. Together, they've built a sanctuary where comfort meets sustainability, and every guest is welcomed like family. With a deep-rooted commitment to conservation and community engagement, their resort isn't just a place to stay—it's an experience that lingers long after you leave.

At the heart of the resort is Dive Academy Fiji, a 5-star PADI Dive Resort and Freediving Center that redefines diving in the region. Unlike crowded dive operations, here the focus is on personalized experiences, with small groups of just four divers per boat. The resort's prime location means dive trips are timed to perfection, aligning with tidal conditions for the best possible visibility and marine activity. Timing is everything on Rainbow Reef—half an hour can mean the difference between an average dive and a mind-blowing one. Between dives, guests return to shore for freshly baked treats, tea, and a moment of serenity before heading back out. And then there's The Great White Wall, a surreal vertical drop covered in ghostly white soft corals. Accessible almost daily, this world-renowned dive site even offers rare night dives, where the reef transforms into an ethereal landscape under the glow of bioluminescence.



For those looking to explore the reef in a different way, freediving courses offer a chance to test personal limits in Fiji's crystal-clear waters. Beyond diving, activities like kayaking, paddleboarding, and cultural excursions round out the experience. A must-do is the visit to Dakuniba Village, where guests can take part in a traditional Sevusevu ceremony before hiking to ancient stone carvings and hidden freshwater pools. With only three bungalows accommodating a maximum of eight guests, Viani Bay Resort strikes a perfect balance between comfort and eco-conscious living. Built from locally sourced materials, the naturally ventilated, solar-powered bungalows blend seamlessly into their surroundings, offering a peaceful retreat after a day of adventure.

Dining is an experience in itself. Every meal is crafted from fresh, locally sourced ingredients, with highlights including Kovu—tender, slow-cooked meat wrapped in leaves—and yellowfin tuna paired with tamarind chutney. Even dessert is a revelation, with dairy-free coconut ice cream and house-made Fiji Sea Salt adding a unique touch. Guests dine at elegantly set communal tables, where conversation flows as easily as the ocean breeze. For those eager to bring a taste of Fiji home, cooking classes provide hands-on lessons in local culinary traditions. Viani Bay Resort isn't just about adventure; it's about making a difference. The resort actively invests in its local community, employing and training staff from nearby villages, funding youth scholarships, supporting women's initiatives, and even sponsoring the local rugby club.

For guests who want to give back, conservation projects like coral planting and giant clam restoration offer hands-on ways to contribute. A key partnership with Fiji's Ministry of Fisheries has even introduced sustainable seaweed farming, supporting both the environment and local livelihoods. These efforts have earned Dive Academy Fiji and Viani Bay Resort prestigious awards for excellence in hospitality, community impact, and ocean conservation.

For those seeking a dive holiday that's as meaningful on land as it is underwater, Viani Bay Resort with Dive Academy Fiji delivers the perfect blend of adventure, relaxation, and purpose. Spend your days exploring the breathtaking Rainbow Reef, your evenings savoring fine Fijian cuisine, and your nights by the fire, serenaded by traditional Fijian songs. This isn't just a dive trip—it's a transformational experience that stays with you long after your fins are dry.

PLAN YOUR TRIP

Website: www.diveacademyfiji.com / www.vianibayresort.com

Email: vianibayresort@diveacademyfiji.com

Phone/WhatsApp: +679 7258184 / +679 7258167

TripAdvisor: Dive Academy Fiji | Viani Bay Resort

Socials:

www.facebook.com/taveunifijisnorkelingdivingrainbowreef/

www.facebook.com/rainbowreeffijiholiday/

www.instagram.com/dive_academy_fiji

GPS Coordinates: -16° 44.691' S / 179° 53.561' E

Getting There: Closest airport: Taveuni (1h15 flight from Nadi).

From there, 20-minute taxi + boat transfer to Viani Bay. From

Savusavu, expect a 1h15 taxi ride + 45-minute boat transfer.

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RAROTONGA, COOK ISLANDS



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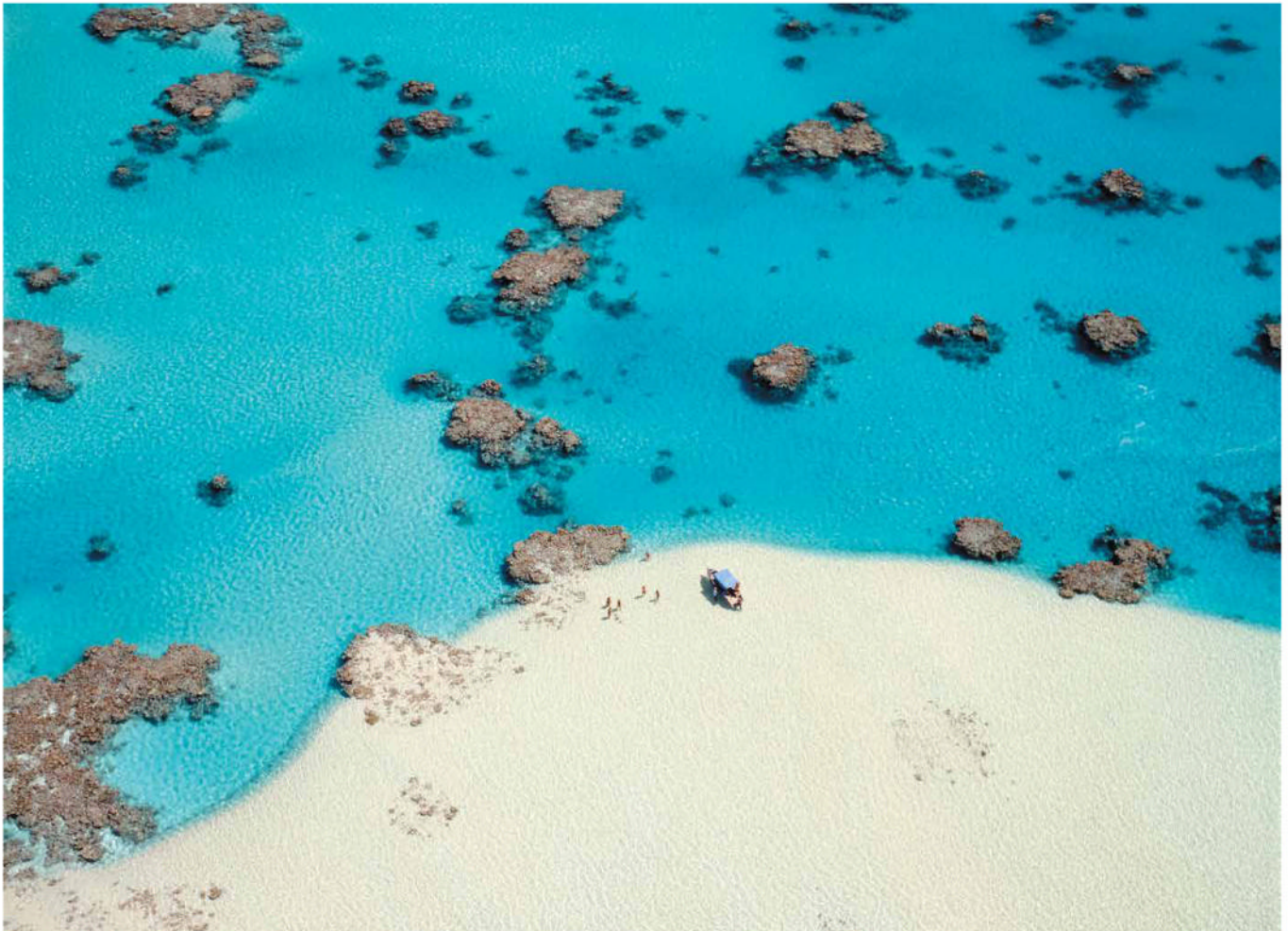
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THE COOK ISLANDS:

A GREAT WINTER ALTERNATIVE

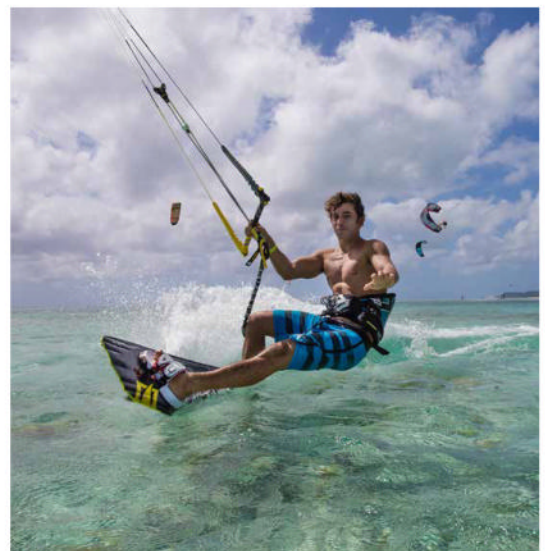
If the idea of a looming winter does not feel like a fun way to spend the next few months, then think The Cooks. Tucked away in the vast Pacific Ocean, this scattered group of 15 islands offers a mix of relaxation, adventure, and culture that outshines the usual tourist-packed tropical destinations. Here's why the Cook Islands is where you should be booking your next adventure escape.

Unspoiled Beauty Without the Crowds

So many destinations are packed, well-trodden, and even remote places can feel like an overdone postcard. The Cook Islands, however, remain refreshingly under-the-radar. The place has a raw, untouched beauty that makes you feel like you've stumbled upon something special. Rarotonga, the largest and most visited island, offers lush jungle-covered mountains, pristine beaches, and a local culture that still feels authentic rather than curated for tourists.

Aitutaki, often hailed as one of the most beautiful lagoons in the world, takes things up another notch. The water here is so clear and blue it looks digitally enhanced. It's the kind of place where you can kayak between tiny, deserted islets and feel like you've stepped into a real-life screensaver.

Don't mistake the Cook Islands for a lie-on-the-beach-all-day kind of place (though you certainly can do that, too). If you prefer your tropical getaways with a side of adrenaline, there's plenty to keep you moving.





Diving and Snorkelling: With warm, crystal-clear waters and an abundance of marine life, the Cook Islands are a diver's dream. Visibility often extends up to 30 metres, and you'll find an underwater world teeming with turtles, reef sharks, and vibrant coral gardens. Snorkellers aren't left out either – just a short swim off the beaches of Rarotonga or Aitutaki will have you face-to-face with a dazzling array of fish.

Hiking the Cross-Island Track: If you need a break from the sea, Rarotonga's Cross-Island Track offers an epic jungle hike through dense rainforest and past towering rock formations, ending at the spectacular Wigmore's Waterfall. Expect a bit of a challenge and a lot of jaw-dropping views.

Lagoon Excursions: In Aitutaki, take a boat trip out to the uninhabited One Foot Island. Here, you can get your passport stamped at one of the world's most remote 'post offices' before walking across sandbars that disappear with the tides.

Cycling and Scootering: The islands are small enough that hiring a scooter or bicycle is the best way to explore. With only one main road circling Rarotonga, you can zip around the island in just over an hour, stopping off for beach swims, coconut shakes, and local markets along the way.

Culture That's More Than Just a Show Island destinations can sometimes feel like they're putting on a performance for visitors, but in the Cook Islands, the culture is very much alive and thriving. The locals – known as Cook Islanders – are proud of their Polynesian roots, and visitors are encouraged to experience it firsthand.

Attend an 'Island Night' for a feast of slow-cooked umu (earth oven) dishes, coconut-based curries, and fresh seafood, followed by energetic drumming and fire dancing. For a more personal experience, visit the Punanga Nui Market on a Saturday morning, where you can chat with local artisans, pick up handmade crafts, and try traditional delicacies like poke (a sweet pudding made from banana and arrowroot).

One of the best things about the Cook Islands is the slow, easy-going pace of life. There are no chain hotels, no traffic lights, and no overwhelming tourist infrastructure – just friendly locals, family-run guesthouses, and an attitude that prioritises relaxation over rush.

It's the kind of place where you adjust your watch to 'island time' within a few hours of arrival. If you're used to the over-scheduled itineraries of more commercialised destinations, this is a welcome change. Here, plans are made loosely, and the best experiences often come from just seeing where the day takes you.

Despite its remote feel, the Cook Islands are surprisingly easy to get to, particularly from New Zealand. Direct flights from Auckland to Rarotonga take about four hours, with connections available from Australia and other Pacific destinations. Once there, inter-island flights on Air Rarotonga make hopping between Rarotonga, Aitutaki, and the outer islands straightforward.

Accommodation ranges from luxury beachfront resorts to laid-back bungalows and budget-friendly guesthouses, ensuring there's something for every type of traveller. While the Cook Islands use New Zealand dollars, prices are generally more affordable than their Pacific counterparts, making it a great-value tropical escape.

Whether you're after an adventure-packed escape, a cultural immersion, or just a chance to unwind in paradise, the Cook Islands deliver it all without the commercialised tourist trappings. It's where adventure meets relaxation, and where every moment feels like a secret only the lucky few have discovered. So, if you're craving an escape that's equal parts thrilling and tranquil, it's time to pack your bags – the Cook Islands are calling.

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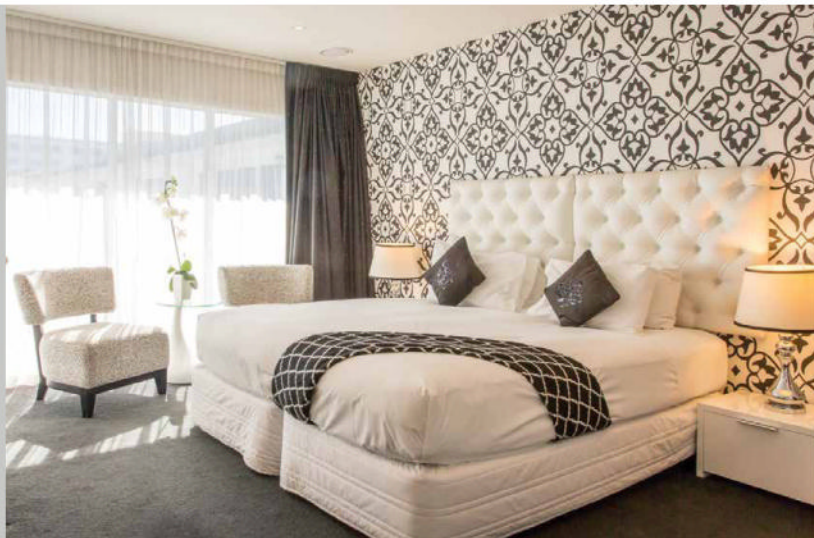
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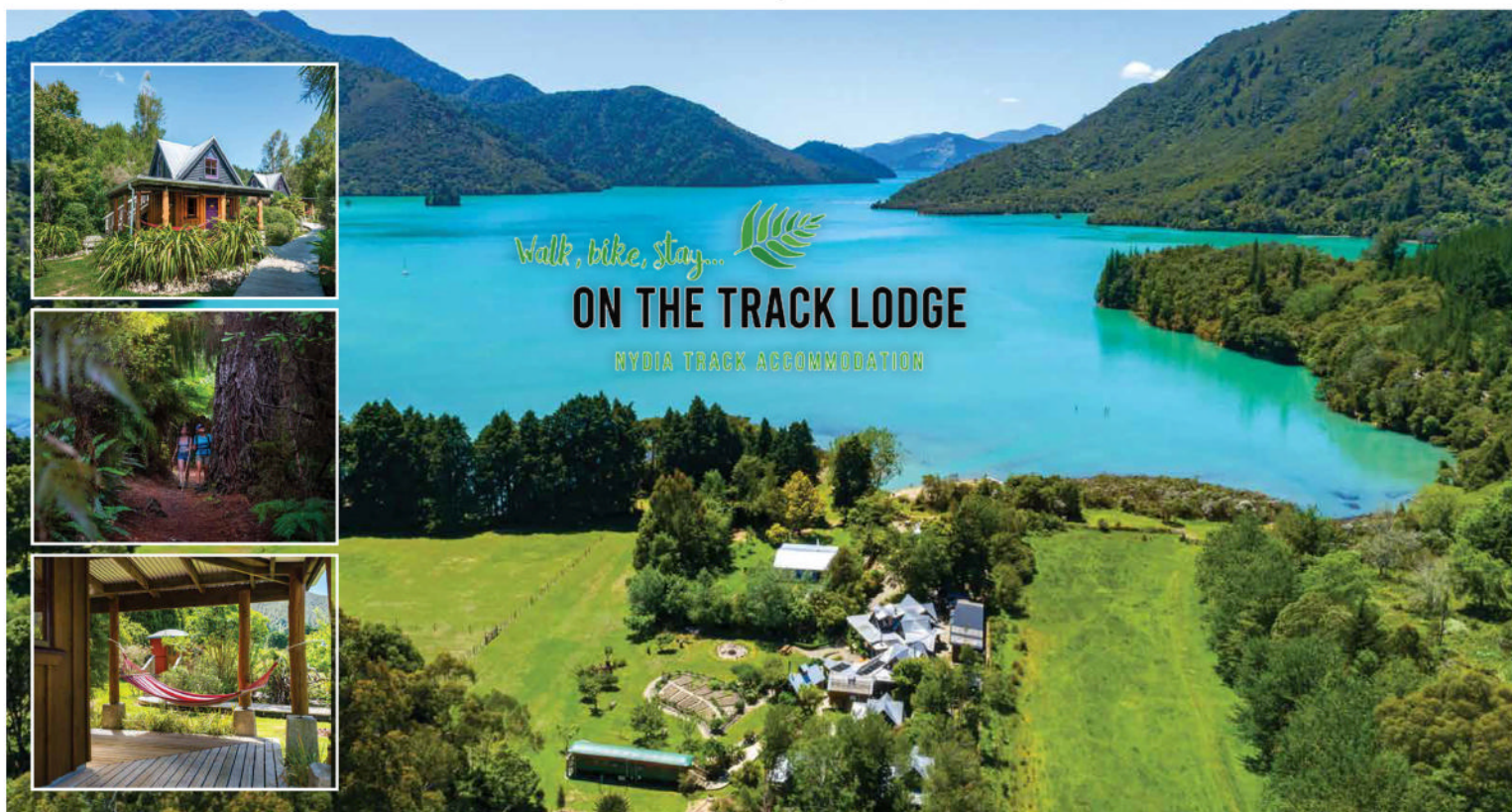
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